Slavery and the
Culture of Taste

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For my beloved children:

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Halima-Rakiya Wanjiku Gikandi

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Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
In that gray vault. The sea. The sea
Has locked them up. The sea is History.
    —Derek Walcott, "The Sea Is History"

I start with Derek Walcott's poem because there is a sense in which this book is about the interlaced experiences of the enslaved—those people without monumental histories, battles, martyrs, or tribal memories—and those others, the cultured subjects of modernity, whose lives are available to us through the monuments and institutions of European civilization—what I call the culture of taste.[1] This book is about the encounter between these two groups of modern subjects across the Atlantic, the sea that in our modern times connected the enslaved and their enslavers. But although the book spends considerable time sketching both the visible and invisible connections of two social practices or realms of experience that have been kept apart so that they can continue to do their cultural work, separately and unequally, it started as an almost casual reflection on the gray vault in which common histories are encrypted.

The informing epigraph, or even epitaph, to this project came from an idea, or at least the fragment of a thought, once encountered in the middle of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's "Mourning and Melancholia": What are we to make of those experiences and losses that cannot be acknowledged because they seem to be at odds with the narrative of

modern identity and must hence be encased in an "interpsychic tomb"?[2] What are we to make of those events that cannot be visibly celebrated as part of our Western identity, because they seem to be at odds with its informing categories, and yet cannot be mourned, because to do so would contaminate the modes of our self-understanding as civilized subjects? This book is not about celebration or mourning; rather, it is an allegorical reading of spaces of repression in the making of the visible or invisible world. I seek to recover transatlantic slavery, often confined to the margins of the modern world picture, as one of the informing conditions of civilized culture; my goal is to find a language for reading what lies buried in the crypt, what survives in the "secret tomb" of modern subjectivity. In the crypt, note Abraham and Torok, "A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence. Sometimes in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations."[3]

Working through the crypt of empire, this book was generated by the need to understand the ghosts lying in the crypts of the black and white Atlantic and the desire to fashion a method for reading the ghostly inside the symbolic economy of civility and civilization. Indeed, the genealogy of this project can be traced to an encounter I had with an early 1700 painting of James Drummond, famous Jacobite and presumptuous Earl of Perth, by the Flemish Scottish painter Sir John Baptiste de Medina (fig. 0.1). James Drummond was recognized as a leading figure in the Scottish Jacobite court in exile in France; he was closely associated with the rebellion to secure the throne for James Stewart, the pretender. Drummond, who became the Duke of Perth in 1716, did not captivate me because of any desire to understand the politics of the English succession or the Jacobite movement in Scotland, which I discovered from the novels of Sir Walter Scott as a student at the University of Edinburgh. What fascinated me about Medina's portrait was, first, Drummond's grandiose pose and, second, what appeared to be its dark counterpoint. In Medina's painting, the sharp colors associated with the Baroque (and a palpable sense of and theatricality) present the viewer with the portrait of the Jacobite as a young man—tall, well shaped, and dressed in armor. This was the pose of power.

In itself, this pose was not unusual. The use of armor as an insignia for the warrior king or prince, or the deployment of bright colors to depict the grandiose nature of the powerful can be detected in paintings of the British court since the early modern period. Famous examples of this pose of power include Sir Anthony van Dyck's portraits of Charles I on horseback. What was different in Medina's portrait of Drummond was

0.1 Sir John Baptiste de Medina, *James Drummond, 2nd titular Duke of Perth, 1673–1720*. Jacobite, about 1700. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

the addition of a black boy, a slave with the collar of bondage around his neck, as a supplement to the sign of power and prestige. The inclusion of the slave in the portrait of the Jacobite as a young man raised some disturbing questions: Why would Drummond, a symbol of the Catholic insurrection against the Protestant establishment, seek to inscribe an enslaved boy in his family portrait? What aura did this figure, undoubtedly the quintessential sign of blackness in bondage, add to the symbolism of white power? What libidinal desires did the black slave represent? What

was the relation of this blackness, confined to the margin of the modern world picture and placed in a state of subjection, to the man of power with his hand on his hip? And how were we to read this diminished, yet not unattractive, blackness in relation to the center embodied by the wig and armor? And where was one to draw the line between the gesture of incorporation and dissociation?

Walking through the archive of empire and the colonial library, I discovered, as have other scholars before me, that the juxtaposition of such scenes—and the interpretative questions that they raise—was not unusual. Indeed, as I worked on this project, trying to make connections that I initially thought existed on an experiential level and were simply denied or repressed by the institutions of interpretation, it occurred to me that the strange and incomprehensible signs of a black presence in the making of high culture often tended to slip away, not because of the invisibility of the enslaved but because the construction of the ideals of modern civilization demanded the repression of what it had introjected— the experience or phenomenon that it had unconsciously assimilated. I was thus drawn to the meaning of those imaginative figures that were essential to modern self-understanding yet needed to be quarantined from the culture of modernity so that the civilizing process could continue. Cultural or conceptual quarantines seemed to be necessitated by the common belief that the black, as unmodern, was either a source of shame or a toxin that threatened the well-being of civilization. What surprised me in the end, however, was the discovery that the world of the enslaved was not simply the submerged and concealed counterpoint of modern civilization; rather, what made the body of the slave repellant—its ugliness and dirt—was also what provided the sensations and the guilty pleasures of modern life.

Hypothesis and Premises

My basic hypothesis in this book is that both the institution of slavery and the culture of taste were fundamental in the shaping of modern identity, and that they did so not apart but as nonidentical twins, similar yet different. I will show how, in this dialectic of identity and difference, slavery and taste came to be intimately connected even when they were structurally construed to be radical opposites; they would function as what Mary Douglas would call "rituals of purity and impurity" that nevertheless create "unity in experience."[4] For Douglas, reflections on dirt and impurity are also commentaries "on the relation of order to disorder, being to nonbeing, form to formlessness, life to death."[5] Often posited as a moral stain on modern identity, slavery could inform and haunt almost all attempts to construct a transcendental set of categories in areas as diverse as moral

philosophy, law, aesthetics, and political economy. But for reasons that I explain in the first two chapters, my focus will be on the introjection of slavery into the realm of manners, civility, sense and sensibility.

The central arguments I present in each of the chapters—and their mode of presentation—will constantly call attention to both the structural connection and disconnection of slavery and the culture of taste. A central thesis of this book is that slavery and the culture of taste were connected by the theories and practices that emerged in the modern period; but I will not argue that they expressively enabled each other in a synchronic structure. On the contrary, I intend to show that these two experiences, though occupying opposite ends of the cultural spectrum, were, in their functions and affect, processes that took place at the same time in the same space and hence need to be studied in what Edward Said has called a "contrapuntal manner" and considered within the economy of what Fredric Jameson terms "expressive causality," the process by which "two distinct regions of social life," even when structurally unconnected, can still be considered to be part of "some general identity" especially at the phenomenological level.[6]

My goal in this book is not to show that the culture of taste and African slavery enabled each other or that enslavement and the ideals of high culture existed in binary opposition. Where evidence warrants it, as in the case studies I provide in the middle chapters, slavery and taste will be shown to have had an undeniable causal relation. In other instances, this relation will be much more discreet and indirect, hence demanding an analogical rather than historical approach. There will be moments of this book when the link between slavery and taste will inevitably appear tenuous; this is especially the case in the first two parts of the book, where I do not seek to establish direct or self-evident connections. What I set out to provide is not evidence from the archives but an allegory of reading, an exploration of the tropes and figures that often point, or lead, to sublimated connections. There are, however, key instances when slavery and taste existed as clear and undeniable binary oppositions. In the American and West Indian colonies, for example, ideals of taste could not be imagined or be secured except in opposition to a negative sensorium associated with slavery. In these cases, my interest is in how this relationship was structured and in the cultural politics that this binary demanded or generated.

Each of the six chapters in this book is informed by an interplay of slavery and the culture of taste as domains of difference and identity. The first chapter serves as an overture to the whole project, reflecting on the character and shape of sensibility in the age of slavery. Here, I explore how ideas and ideals about taste and beauty demanded powerful counterpoints built around notions of black difference. Focusing on British debates on the question of taste and the role of culture in the shaping of

modern identity and the reality of enslavement and its objects, I use this chapter to reflect on how some of the most important ideas of bourgeois culture—namely, art and freedom—were mapped and haunted by their contaminating danger, manifestly represented by the racialized black body. I also use this chapter to locate my work within changing debates on empire and the symbolic economy of slavery.

Chapter 2 moves beyond the critical debates raised in chapter 1 to provide.a more concrete narrative of the coexistence of taste and slavery as aesthetic objects and products of everyday life in the modern world. Here, I explore the link between slavery, consumption, and the culture of taste, all-important conduits for understanding modern identity. With a particular emphasis on changing theories of taste in eighteenth-century Britain, I provide an analysis or reading of the troubled relation between race, ideologies of taste, and the culture of consumption. I explore how slavery enabled the moment of taste; led to fundamental transformations in the self-understanding of modern subjects; and, consequently, resulted in a redefinition of notions of freedom, selfhood, and representation.

Having made the case that slavery informed key ideas on what it meant to be a man or woman of taste in the eighteenth century, I use the middle chapters of the book to make a more explicit link between the concept and practice of taste, within the British tradition, and the political econ-omy of West Indian and American slavery. In chapter 3 I present two instances of how slave money shaped the moment of taste in both prag-matic and conceptual terms. I provide a substantive exploration of the cultural traffic between Britain and its colonial outposts in order to show how the experience of slavery was turned into an aesthetic object that was woven into the fabric of everyday life. I then seek to connect slave money and the power and prestige of art by focusing on the aesthetic lives of William Beckford and Christopher Codrington, famous heirs to slave fortunes, who sought to remake their social standing through the patronage of art and the mastery of taste.

In Chapter 4, I turn to the relationship between the violence of slavery and the culture of conduct within the geography of enslavement itself. Here, I reflect on the status of art and taste in the heart of American slavery. I argue that although members of the American plantocracy in Virginia (William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson, for example) sought to fashion their lives after those of British gentry, they could not separate themselves from the concrete materiality of plantation slavery. How, then, could a, culture of taste be cultivated in the presence of a thriving slave economy? At the center of this chapter is the inescapable relation between the planters' striving for high culture and the deployment of violence as a mode of containing what was considered to be the danger of Africa. Africa and Africans enabled the wealth of the planter, but they

needed to be exorcized so that white civilization could take hold in the new world.

Slavery simultaneously challenged and informed some of the central tenets of modern life; it presented a fundamental challenge to the redemptive capacity of art and taste; yet, as I show in chapters 5 and 6, African slaves in the Americas recognized the extent to which their own sense of selfhood depended on the cultivation of cultural spaces outside the regimen of enforced work and truncated leisure. The last two chapters of the book provide a study of the slaves' own response to their evacuation from the realm of taste and modern identity. Some famous former slaves like Olaudah Equiano and Phillis Wheatley sought to master and appropriate the culture of taste itself, but the slaves who interest me in these two chapters are those who sought to develop what I call a counterculture of taste—those subjects who rejected the notions of order, rationality, and proper conduct that appealed to their masters—and created a cultural underground in what Frantz Fanon was later to term "the zone of occult instability" (*déséquilibre occulte*).[7]

A Note on Method

While this work draws on various disciplines—history, philosophy, art history, aesthetics, and literary criticism—and has arguments with scholars in all of them, it is essentially a work of cultural criticism. It is not intended to be a monograph on eighteenth-century social history, the history of modern art, or aesthetic theory. From a historical perspective, my point of reference is the eighteenth century, because that is the age in which slavery and the culture of taste emerged and transformed the cultural landscape of Britain and the Americas. I spend considerable time in the archive of empire in the eighteenth century, because it was in that period when broad questions about taste and slavery became issues for intellectual debate. It was in the age of Enlightenment that slavery appeared to be anachronistic to how modern Europeans imagined themselves and their society. It is in the archive of the period that one could come across figures such as William Beckford regarded as elevated men of taste and patrons of the culture of consumption in England and then read about major slave revolts—for the planter class, the ultimate expression of African barbarism—taking place in their Jamaican plantations.

If the structure of this book appears bifurcated, it is because it is addressed to two audiences, both focused on the same object of analysis—cultures of empire—yet with divergent goals, terms of reference, and methodologies. For students of modern British culture, especially those invested powerfully in the aesthetic and the literary as the mark of cultural

achievement, I think there is something useful to be learned about the cultural traffic between the plantations of Jamaica or the antebellum South and the emergence of forms of cultural expressions such as the Gothic. Was it incidental that the authors of two of the most important English Gothic novels, William Beckford (*Vathek*) and Matthew Gregory Lewis (*The Monk*), were both heirs to West Indian plantations and absentee slave masters? Even when the nature of the exact link between West Indian slavery and forms of Englishness might be debatable and should be debated, it is still important to know that the Coromantee rebellion that started in Ballard Beckford's frontier plantation in St. Mary's County, Jamaica, in 1760, transformed the language of Gothic. How colonial events entered the idiom of ordinary Englishness is one of the many concepts this book seeks to understand.

For students of slave culture and the black Atlantic, already the subject of an immense archive, my goal was to cross the historical and social boundaries that have come to characterize studies of the enslaved. Indeed one of the virtues of the broadly cultural-studies approach I adopt here is that it provides me with the freedom to move across the vast landscape of slavery at a time when the immensity of the archive of enslavement has forced scholars to specialize in even narrower regions and periods. My book moves from the West African coast to Scotland, from the West Indies to the antebellum South and, occasionally, to Brazil and Argentina. I adopt this wide-angled approach both to underscore the existence of African slavery as a perversely unique global phenomenon and to provide a thick description for what was supposed to be absent in its theaters of action: an aesthetic experience among the enslaved.

Finally, let me note that the style of this book and the mode of presentation I adopt are as important as the argument that I present. As my first two chapters indicate, I want to tell stories about two traditions that are often kept apart, and in order to do so, I interpolate and juxtapose experiences, eschewing linear structures and chronologies. Quite often, I dislocate categories and experiences in order to defamiliarize our understanding of modern culture. In other cases, I recover older terminologies, such as phenomenology, in order to redirect attention to experiences that are easily elided in the name of antiessentialism. Above all, I read slavery not simply as a shameful episode in modern culture and a sign of moral failure, but as a caesura, a point of division in the narrative of modernity, not a break from it. Here, slavery will be explored in its powerful and painful materiality, but it will also be read, in its figural or semiotic sense, as the sign of the social and moral boundaries that made modern culture possible, signaling who belonged and who was excluded, yet pointing to the ways in which inclusion and exclusion informed each other.

Slavery and the Culture of Taste

1.1 Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt, *Two Negroes*. 1661.

Overture:

Sensibility in the Age of Slavery

Sometime around 1659, the Dutch painter Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt sat in his studio in Amsterdam and commenced work on *Two Negroes* (fig. 1.1), considered one of the most compelling paintings of the last phase of his illustrious career. Working with African models and operating within a Dutch culture whose domestic economy was driven by the slave trade, Rembrandt sought to turn his black figures, people who most probably had arrived in the European Low Countries as slaves or servants, into elevated subjects through art. This gesture—the transformation of the most marginal figures in society into elevated works of art—was most evident in Rembrandt's keen sense of the contrast between the two African models. This difference was crucial because it implicitly questioned the undifferentiated image of the black as fetish or stereotype that was dominant in the records of Dutch travelers at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Rembrandt's Africans were certainly not the generalized villains that agents of the Dutch slave interests were observing on the West African coast—"all without exception, Crafty, Villainous, and Fraudulent," according to William Bosman.[1] On the contrary, these portraits were elevated to a position, common in the early modern period, in which blackness was associated with dignity, decency, and virtue, if not equality.[2] We don't, of course, actually know who the men in the picture were, nor where they came from, but for students of the African image in the European imagination, *Two Negroes* had fulfilled a key tenet in theories of the aesthetic: the painter had used his genius to reclaim the human from the detritus of enslavement. Art had "ennobled this humanity."[3]

In the same year that Rembrandt was ennobling the black in the aesthetic sphere, affirming the humanity of the African in unmistakable and

unequivocal terms, the Dutch merchant Pedro Diez Troxxilla wrote a receipt for the slaves he had received from Matthias Beck, governor of Curaçao:

> I, underwritten, hereby acknowledge to have received from the Hon'ble Matthias Beck, governor over the Curaçao Islands, sixty two slaves, old and young, in fulfillment and performance of the contract concluded on the 26th June, A'o 1659, by Messrs. Hector Pieters and Guillaume Momma, with the Lords Directors at the Chamber at Amsterdam; and as the negroes by the ship *Coninck Salomon* were disposed of, long before the arrival of the undersigned, and the ship *Eyckenboom*, mentioned in the aforesaid contract, has not arrived at this date, the said governor has accommodated me, the undersigned, to the best of his ability with the abovementioned sixty two slaves, and on account of the old and young which are among the aforesaid negroes, has allowed a deduction of two negroes, so that there remain sixty head in the clear, for which I, the undersigned, have here according to contract paid to the governor aforesaid for forty six head, at one hundred and twenty pieces of eight, amounting to five thousand five hundred and twenty pieces of eight. Wherefore, fourteen negroes remain still to be paid for, according to contract in Holland by Messrs. Hector Pieters and Guillaume Momma in Amsterdam, to Messrs. the directors aforesaid, on presentation of this my receipt, to which end three of the same tenor are executed and signed in the presence of two undersigned trustworthy witnesses, whereof the one being satisfied the others are to be void. Curaçao in Fort Amsterdam, the 11th January, A'o 1660. It being understood that the above fourteen negroes, to be paid for in Amsterdam, shall not be charged higher than according to contract at two hundred and eighty guilders each, amounting together to three thousand nine hundred and twenty Carolus guilders.[4]

The receipt was more than the customary acknowledgment of goods received; it was also a detailed inventory of objects of trade and the geography in which they were exchanged. And this correspondence, dated June 1659, can be read as a sample of the functional idiom of what would come to be known, in the verbal trickery of euphemism and understatement, as "The African Trade," a triangular commerce joining the industrial centers of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. What made this trade unique in the history of the modern world was that its primary commodity was black bodies, sold and bought to provide free labor to the plantation complexes of the new world, whose primary products—coffee, sugar, tobacco—were needed to satiate the culture of taste and the civilizing process.[5] In this triangle, African bodies mediated the complex relations between slave traders like Troxxilla, colonial governors such as Beck, and the unnamed but powerful directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce.

Here, then, are the startling contrasts that will initiate my meditation on the relation between slavery and the culture of taste: on one hand, we have the work of art endowing aura to some of the humblest subjects in a modern polity; on the other hand, we have these same people reduced to mere objects of trade. Like the other great works of the major Baroque painters of the period—Diego Velasquez and Peter Paul Rubens, for example—Rembrandt's painting was unique for placing Africans at the center of the frame of the picture and not confining them to borders as was the case in the worlds of an earlier generation of European court painters, including Anthony van Dyck's portrait paintings.[6] But the recognition of the African as a figure worthy of representation in painting was often at odds with the perception of Africans as objects of trade, the primary conception that was making its way into the prosaic discourse of the time, often in the form of official correspondence, decrees, or so-called accurate accounts of Guinea. In the prose of the period, the slaves who had become the cog around which trade and social relationships revolved were conceived as mute and invisible objects, available to their interlocutors only as synecdoche, parts standing for the whole, subject to monetary additions and deductions, valued solely in terms of guilders, or, in the English case, guineas.

On the surface, Troxxilla and the members of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce may not seem to have anything to do with the works of one of the most distinguished painters from the Low Countries in the Baroque period. And for modern connoisseurs of art, Troxxilla's almost impersonal and quotidian prose of trade, notaries, and contracts seems so far removed from Rembrandt's painting that it is hard to believe that the two were produced in the same culture, in the same city, in the same year. And yet, in spite of the powerful moral geography that separates them, these cultural texts were united by their physical and cultural proximity. They represent the two sides of our modern identity. Indeed, the now barely visible connection between matters of art and taste and the political economy of slavery generates the questions that inform this chapter and this book as a whole: What was the relation between aesthetic objects and the political economy of slavery? How could such elevated images of art exist in the same realm as the harsh world of enslavement and the slave trade? How could the figure of the black simultaneously be the source of what Walter Benjamin aptly called "aura" and a prosaic object in a discourse of commodity fetishism?[7] And how do we read these two spheres of social life—one rooted in the realm of the aesthetic, civility, and taste, and the other in the political economy of slavery—in the same register? This introductory chapter explores the cultural, historical, and aesthetic context in which these questions emerged and why they continue to haunt the narrative of modern identity.

2

Within the culture of modernity, slavery always appears to be anachronistic. This anachronism arises from the fact that the terms in which the culture of modernity defined itself—and has hence been defined—seemed at odds with all that enslavement entails. Modern identity was premised on the supremacy of a self functioning within a social sphere defined by humane values; indeed, the distinctiveness of this moment in the history of the Western world has been predicated on the existence of free and self-reflective subjects, not bodies in bondage. And while there are disagreements on what constituted modernity and what its key integers were, and while there are still unresolved disputes about the origins, history, and consequences of a modern identity, all major documents on the Enlightenment and its aftermath have been premised on the idea of what Marcel Mauss and others have termed "the càtegory of the person."[8] Whether we approach the issue from the perspective of the German Enlightenment (Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant) or the British tradition associated with the Scottish Enlightenment (David Hume, Lord Kames, and Adam Smith), the culture of modernity was envisioned across Europe as the moment of liberation of the subject from the dictates of tradition, religion, and old rules of conduct.[9] In its simplest form, the project of Enlightenment, considered to be the high point of modernity, was conceived as the production and valorization of the subject as autonomous, self-reflective, and unencumbered by immediate experience.

Within the European continental tradition, the production of a unique and self-reflective human subject was closely aligned with the project of rationality and the autonomy of aesthetic judgment. Modern subjects were those individuals who were capable of using their faculties of reason and judgment in the conduct of human affairs; the individual was the sole arbiter of meaning and identity, not a cog in a system of institutional and institutionalized rules and behaviors. This, of course, was the claim made at the beginning of Immanuel Kant's 1784 essay, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"

> Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding! For enlightenment of this kind, all that is needed is freedom. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all—freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters.[10]

Within the series of debates and disputes that came to define the European Enlightenment, reason and the subject's capacity for rationality

were paramount. The idea of Enlightenment was premised on a funda-
mental belief "in the power of human reason to change society and liber-
ate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all
backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than
by religion or tradition."[11] The ambition of the Enlightenment, then, was
to understand human life through what Kant considered to be a priori
principles or ideas of reason, now separated from the event as a sensual
or phenomenological experience. All that was needed for enlightened
self-understanding was the most innocuous form of freedom: the "free-
dom to make *public use* of one's reason in all matters."[12] And if Kant's
little document is considered to represent a major milestone in the story
of European modernity, it is because of its precise isolation of the two is-
sues that would provide the fulcrum for a modern identity—the question
of freedom and rationality.

That the mass of African slaves who drove the European economies of
the time were not free was not a matter that bothered Kant or his British
interlocutors, such as David Hume, because the black was excluded from
the domain of modern reason, aesthetic judgment, and the culture of
taste. Kant and Hume, often considered to be rivals in the battle to define
the contours of reason and taste, would still find concurrence when it
came to the question of an alleged black inferiority, either in morals or ra-
tionality. Kant asserted this concurrence of opinion in his complimentary
use of Hume as a source in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful
and the Sublime*:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that arises above the trifling.
> Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has
> shown talents and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks
> who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them
> have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented
> anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though
> some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through special gifts
> earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two
> races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as
> in color.[13]

This view was a common one in the highest European intellectual cir-
cles. In fact, the specter of blackness haunted all attempts to elaborate
and valorize the discourse of modern freedom, and by the middle of the
eighteenth century, when the order of slavery came to be seen as the
central cog in the machinery of commerce and the wealth of nations,
blackness—once exalted as a symbol of sanctity in the last great cycle of
paintings of the Adoration of Christ at the end of the sixteenth century
and the Baroque painters mentioned above—had come to represent what

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, writing in a different context, have called "the rock bottom of symbolic form."[14]

The "rock bottom" of black representation can even be found in the most unexpected places, such as the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*, edited by Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, published in Paris between 1751 and 1772. Here, under the entry "Nègre," written by M. le Romain, the language and authority of natural science were deployed to set the black apart from the rest of humanity. The African, defined as a "Man who inhabits different parts of the earth, from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn," was identified as the figure of radical difference: "Africa has no other inhabitants but the blacks. Not only the color, but also the facial traits distinguish them from other men: large and flat noses, thick lips, and wool instead of hair. They appear to constitute a new species of mankind."[15] The 1798 American edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* went a step further, exiling the African from the human community in rabid and libelous terms:

> NEGRO, Homo pelli nigra, a name given to a variety of the human species, who are entirely black, and are found in the Torrid zone, especially in that part of Africa which lies within the tropics. In the complexion of negroes we meet with various shades; but they likewise differ far from other men in all the features of their face. Round cheeks, high cheek-bones, a forehead somewhat elevated, a short, broad, flat nose, thick lips, small ears, ugliness, and irregularity of shape, characterize their external appearance. The negro women have the loins greatly depressed, and very large buttocks, which give the back the shape of a saddle. Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race: idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man when left to himself.[16]

While it is true that the most powerful arguments against slavery were made by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, it is hard to find a more virulent description of the black than this one authorized by the institutions of modern knowledge, built on scientific explanation, geographical difference, and physiology.

But my main concern here is not why the great philosophers of freedom sought to exclude the black from the narrative of universal reason. Rather, I am interested in the emergence and shaping of a discourse predicated on the need or desire to quarantine one aspect of social life—the tasteful, the beautiful, and the civil—from a public domain saturated by diverse forms of commerce, including the sale of black bodies in the

modern marketplace. For if one were looking for a methodological link among a group of philosophers as diverse as the German idealists, the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment and the English Whigs, it is perhaps to be found in the articulation of a discourse of social life in which the qualities that distinguished the modern self were transcendental of the "array of cultural materials" that actually constituted the modern self.[17] For Kant, to use a common example, the issue of transcendentalism was simple: in order to have a proper understanding of moral behavior, the age needed "to discover rules or principles of conduct which are logically independent of experience and which are capable of contradiction."[18] Even Adam Smith, who was much more concerned with questions of utility and the production of goods to satisfy immediate desires, was keen to separate the means of wealth from its ends: from "a certain love of art and contrivance," Smith noted, "we sometimes seem to value the means more than the end, and to be eager to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, rather from a view to perfect and improve a certain beautiful and orderly system, than from any immediate sense or feeling of what they either suffer or enjoy."[19]

In the new value system rooted in rationality, the analytic spirit would march triumphantly "to conquer reality" and accomplish "its great task of reducing the multiplicity of natural phenomena to a single universal rule."[20] Thus, whether we are dealing with the rule of reason or matters of taste, the project of modernity was premised on the search for rules in which the larger concerns of the world, including the slavery that reached its zenith in the period of Enlightenment, would be sublimated to an idealistic structure. Considered to be a detritus that came between the modern mind and pure concepts, experience had to be processed through higher forms such as reason and the aesthetic. In fact, the turn to a systematic aesthetic theory, one of the major features of the age of Enlightenment, was premised on the belief that it was in the field of art and its judgment that the traditional opposition between reason and imagination could be reconciled. However, the ideology of the aesthetic was predicated on the capacity of the aesthetic or the sensual to be posited as analogical to reason. This is considered to be the achievement of German aesthetic theory from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Reflections on Poetry*, first published in 1735, to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.[21] Here, in the transcendental project of aesthetic practice and judgment, materials that were considered anterior to the process of European self-fashioning, such as slaves, Indians, and the poor, were confined to notational margins and footnotes; the Enlightenment's world picture was adumbrated by "a geographical consciousness based on the distinctiveness of the part of the world that came to be called 'Europe.'"[22]

Europe could not function as an idea or structure of identity without its real or imagined others, who, since the beginnings of modernity at the end of the sixteenth century, were increasingly being incorporated into the modern world picture. Of course, people considered to be others had been central to the emergence and consolidation of a European identity since the Middle Ages, but in the modern period, alterity had become more than a simple inscription of the differences of other peoples, other cultures, other histories; it had now assumed a structural function: the designator of what enabled Europe, or whatever geographical area took that name, to assume a position of cultural superiority and supremacy. This new sense of European superiority was reflected in the new maps placing Northern Europe at the center of the world, or in monumental works of art, such as Giovanni Batista Tiepolo's frescoes at the palace of the prince-bishop of Würzburg, which place the allegories of Asia, Africa, and America alongside a domineering Europe.[23] And as slavery was consolidated and later challenged in the course of the eighteenth century, there was a significant shift: from earlier European views of Africans as agents who could be considered, even tentatively, to belong to the human community to their reduction to objects of trade or figures in the shadows of modernity.

The contrast between Rembrandt's painting and Troxxilla's inventory discussed at the beginning of this chapter was certainly not unusual, but it signifies a more complex shift in the imagination of African others under the pressures of slavery and the slave trade. Indeed, one of the central arguments I will make in this book is that slavery—and especially the powerful moral, visual, and economic claims associated with it—had a salient effect on what one may call the interiorized realm of the European experience—namely, the space of sense and sensibility. These shifts were reflected in the histories, discourses, and images in which African difference and its attendant barbarism were invoked as the counterpoint to modern civilization or civility.

As always, it was the visible and iconographic view that represented these shifts. Consider this example: In 1643 the Christian king of the kingdom of the Congo, Dom Garcia II, sent one of his ambassadors to Recife to see Johan Maurits, the Dutch governor of the Netherlands' possessions in Brazil. In a painting of the ambassador, often attributed to Albert Eckhout (fig. 1.2), the Congolese envoy is represented wearing a broad hat with feathers, a black velvet coat with gold and silver trimmings, and a sash of the same colors, all symbolizing power, prestige, and presence. At a time when the Congolese were considered by Europeans to be equal partners in global trade and cultural exchange, the location of their ambassador at the center of a European portrait was not unusual or extraordinary.

1.2 Albert Eckhout, *Congolese Envoy to Recife in Dutch Brazil.* From Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World,* 122.

In contrast, Frans van der Mijn's 1742 painting of the Dutch governor of the slave fort of Elmina (fig. 1.3) indicates the increasing diminishment of black figures in the European imagination and the domination of the slave interest in the construct of the modern social imaginary. Here we have the portrait of the European man at the top of the world, the agent of a Dutch empire that by 1700 had "extended trade and established

outposts in western and southern Africa, Asia, and the Americas."[24] By the time the Dutch established their hegemony on the West African coast, slavery had replaced gold as the major commodity of trade, a fact that led to a new addition—the figure of the slave—to the iconography of power and prestige. It is not accidental, then, argues Alison Blakely in *Blacks in the Dutch World*, that the period in which the slave trade accounted for most of Dutch wealth and power also led to the production of the largest category of paintings with blacks as adjuncts to the portraits of "Dutch burgher families, groups, and individuals."[25] According to Blakely, this kind of art, in which the portrait of an aristocratic was framed by a black shadow, was produced in the Low Countries more than anywhere else in the world. These portraits were intended primarily to project the power and prestige brought on by the new trade, "to celebrate achievement and to leave a lasting record for posterity."[26] Confronted with the diversity of the human world, the modern spirit seemed unable to incorporate the difference that it nevertheless needed to imagine its modernity, and hence authorized itself by inventing a hierarchical structure in which the whiteness of Europe would be refracted by the shadows cast by others.

3

My goal in this book is not to recover the figure of the black from the margins of the modern world picture and to restore it to an imaginary or nonexistent center; rather, I have set out to recognize this marginalized figure, often denied even the status of the human, as occupying an essential and constitutive role in the construct of the interiority of modernity itself. I aim to read this figure and the project of modernity—especially its economy of sense and sensibility or taste—contrapuntally, thus, to give slavery, the great unspeakable of our age, an obtrusive identity and to bring it "into active contact with current theoretical concerns."[27] This contrapuntal reading provokes several intractable questions: How do we reconcile the world that Rembrandt imagined when he was painting *Two Negroes* and his careful and calculated focus on the distinctiveness of his two models, their human qualities and individual differences, with Troxxilla's receipt for African bodies crossing the Atlantic Ocean to enrich the coffers of the Dutch golden age? How does one explain the transformation of the African from the center of Rembrandt's portrait to a mere shadow on the margins of Van der Mijn's man of trade?

There are two ways of going about this task, and they are both valid, although they present us with a different set of problems: one concerns the role of the modern system of art in the fashioning of a European identity; the other relates to specific British conceptual and discursive

1.3 Frans van der Mijn, *Jan Pranger, Director General of the Gold Coast (1730–1734)*. 1742.

attempts to reconcile commerce and taste. I will sketch both sides of this narrative of modernity because I want to trouble the boundaries that divide continental European debates on aesthetic judgment from the British culture of taste and also question the conceptual boundaries that have hitherto separated the political economy of slavery from the institution of high culture.

Let me start with the idea and institution of art, without doubt one of the key pillars of both modernity and the culture of taste. Modernity and

the idea of the aesthetic constitute a powerful dialectic in Europe in the eighteenth century, and they inform each other in remarkable ways. As Paul Oskar Kristeller observed in a seminal survey of the emergence of the modern system of the arts, the dawn of modernity made the idea of art possible; in turn, the institutionalization of modernity made the emergence and consolidation of some dominant ideas about the aesthetic—"taste and sentiment, genius, originality and creative imagination"—central to modern conversations about the self.[28] A key component of the modernizing gesture of European culture in the eighteenth century was the location of art at the center of systems of knowledge and its wide acceptance, among elites and courtiers alike, as a key cognate in the definition of what constituted a modern social life. In the eighteenth century, perhaps for the first time in European history, "the various arts were compared with each other and discussed on the basis of common principles."[29] And if the role of art in society dominated intellectual debates in almost every major European country, it was because of a certain modern craving for a second order of representation in which the sensuousness of human life could be realized and private desire and public duty, already separated in the categorical imperative of rationality, would be reconciled. But perhaps one of the most important developments in the history of art in the eighteenth century was its democratization, or, more appropriately, its shift from being a preoccupation of elites and their academies, or courts and their courtiers, to "an amateur public."[30] The gist of this transformation was caught by Joseph Addison in a memorable hyperbole in *Spectator* 10: "It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought philosophy out of the Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in the Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and Coffee-Houses."[31]

The process of democratizing the arts, however, was delimited by the transcendental claims associated with the aesthetic realm. For precisely at the point when it was given special value in the social sphere, art was also asked to stand apart from other domains of lived experience. Indeed, one of the most persistent claims made about art in Europe, at least since the eighteenth century, is what has come to be known as its "ephemerality"—its existence "outside the framework of use and purpose which defines human life."[32] Criticism or judgment of art, even when it was by amateurs, was necessitated by a persistent and widespread desire to establish a fundamental division between art and life. Here, as in the discussions surrounding reason and rationality, the ideology of the aesthetic would become the product of a process of purification, the purging of those categories that seemed to interfere with the drive toward autonomy and disinterested judgment.

Looking back on this tradition of aesthetic judgment, Ernst Cassirer would go on to argue that it was in aesthetic theory that "the pure necessity of philosophic thought" would come to fruition, even claiming it was in the sphere of the aesthetic that a synthesis of the critical and productive functions of thought would be achieved.[33] Before this period, Cassirer claimed, thought had been defined by a struggle between nature and culture, or between scientific and artistic ideals; theories of art struggled to justify themselves in the court of reason and always seemed to fall short. But with the foundation of a systematic aesthetics, a process associated with Alexander Baumgarten, "a new intellectual synthesis opens up."[34] Whereas the criticism of art previously had been predicated on concepts outside the aesthetic domain, now art would become the source of the categories that judged it. Aesthetics—the system of judging art—would thus become a science.[35]

The project of turning the aesthetic into a science, however, was bedeviled by problems from the start; although some advocates of an autonomous aesthetic continued to hold out the possibility that it might provide a higher order of truth, debates about the role of art in the social order were dominated by a recognition of the gap between works of art as material objects and the idealistic or transcendental goals that informed them.[36] It now seems apparent that an aesthetic project that was understood to be "the culmination of Idealist philosophy, or perhaps even Western metaphysics as a whole" would sooner or later come up against its limits.[37] Indeed, if the aesthetic seemed to have fallen out of favor for most of the twentieth century (that is, until its supposed return in the 1990s), it was because when explored from the end or limit of modernity, the work of art seemed to perform, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno posited it, the same function as enchantment or magic, to serve as a form of deception: "The work of art still has something in common with enchantment: it posits its own, self-enclosed area, which is withdrawn from the context of profane existence, and in which special laws apply."[38]

My position in relation to these debates will become clearer by the end of this chapter, but I hesitate to condemn the ideology of the aesthetic as a form of mystification or alienation, or to endorse the idealistic claims made for art as a form of cognition outside the mechanization of social life. In response to the claims made on behalf of the aesthetic, I want to hold on to the possibility that the realm of the sensuous could simultaneously function as the site in which the black body was imprisoned but also as the conduit for its liberation. Whether we are dealing with questions of aesthetic judgment or the realm of taste, the compulsion for a redemptive hermeneutics through an appeal to sensuousness cannot be dismissed out of hand. As the last two chapters of this book will show, for

those who were trapped in the political and moral economy of slavery, the presentation of the self through the work of art or an engagement with culture as a weapon against commodification had the capacity to salvage the human identity of Africans in their sites of repression and denial.

Consider the example of Ignatius Sancho. In both his self-representation as a man of letters and in the historic painting by Thomas Gainsborough, Sancho, born a slave in the middle passage, could become a compelling, indeed, a model, modern subject (fig. 1.4). Here we have an unquestionable affirmation of the intimate relation between subjectivity and representation and of the prism of the aesthetic as an "exemplary form of modern reflection."[39] Sancho's correspondence and transactions with other subjects of taste—people such as John Meheux, member of the Indian Board of Trade in London, or Lawrence Sterne, famous novelist— were the means through which this former slave could reflect on his human identity and emplace himself in the modern public sphere.[40]

Here is Sancho writing to Meheux:

> I am uneasy about your health—I do not like your silence—let some good body or other give me a line, just to say how you are—I will, if I can, see you on Sunday.... Now, my dear M[eheux], I know you have a persuasive eloquence among the women—try your oratorical powers.—You have many women—and I am sure there must be a great deal of charity amongst them—Mind, we ask no money—only rags—mere literal rags—patience is a ragged virtue—therefore strip the girls, dear M[eheux], strip them of what they can spare—a few superfluous worn-out garments—but leave them pity benevolence—the charities—goodness of heart—love——and the blessings of yours truly with affection, or something very like it,
>
> I. SANCHO[41]

In an epistolary transaction like this one covering the pleasurable habits of the London metropolitan culture in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was difficult to detect any distinction between Sancho, the former slave, the child of the middle passage, and Meheux, a distinguished English gentleman working for the board that oversaw the governance of India. Sancho was effectively performing the culture of taste as a gesture of affiliation; in the realm of art the former slave could reimagine himself as a human subject.[42]

It is now taken for granted by scholars, ranging from the Frankfurt School and neo-Marxism to poststructuralists of various kinds, that the failure of the aesthetic was inherent in its self-positioning as the fulfillment of reason rather than its opposite. No one can write about the redemptive claims of art, especially in the context of slavery and the Holocaust, without confronting Adorno's admonition that "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." But Adorno also recognized that the task

1.4 Thomas Gainsborough, *Ignatius Sancho*. 1768. Oil on canvas.

facing cultural criticism was how to develop a method for understanding "the dialectic of culture and barbarism" at its limits, outside the concepts that had enabled it.[43] In *Negative Dialectics* Adorno argued that he had set out "to free dialectics from . . . affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy," and this implied "a critique of the foundation concept as well as the primacy of substantive thought."[44]

One way of troubling the relation between the ideology of the aesthetic and the political economy of modernity, then, is to shift focus from continental European debates on the aesthetic as an epistemological or

metaphysical category to British discourses on taste, which emerged under the pressure of the expanding horizons of commercial life in the middle of the eighteenth century. Kant, as is well known, denied the British tradition of taste any claims to philosophical reflection because, as Howard Caygill has noted, "it did not properly account for the universality and necessity of its judgements," and it tended to confuse sensibility and rationality or to endow the former with "the properties of rational law."[45] Kant's complaint was that the British aesthetic tradition was not transcendental or universal enough to claim the status of philosophical reflection: "To make psychological observations, as Burke did in his treatise on the beautiful and sublime, thus to assemble material for the systematic connection of empirical rules in the future without aiming to understand them, is probably the sole duty of empirical psychology, which can hardly even aspire to rank as a philosophical science."[46]

One could, of course, argue that what brought British theorists of taste closer to adjudicating the relation between the realm of art and conduct and the experiences of everyday life was precisely their inability to differentiate sense and sensibility from the properties of rationality and, by extension, their substitution of psychology for empirical rules. Keenly attuned to the daily tensions between commerce and sensibility, British writers on taste were able to generate a set of discourses in which the subjects' phenomenal or sensuous experience could be brought face-to-face with the materiality of modern society. Here, a concern with matters aesthetic was not considered part of an attempt to transcend the world of commerce, but to develop rules and standards that would enable the modern subject to reconcile the opposing demands of the production of goods and civic responsibility. This was the point affirmed by Edmund Burke in the last paragraph of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* where he asserted that his design had not been "to enter into the criticism of the sublime and beautiful in any art, but to attempt to lay down such principles as may tend to ascertain, to distinguish, and to form a sort of standard for them; which purposes I thought might be best effected by an enquiry into the properties of such things in nature as raise love and astonishment in us; and by shewing in what manner they operated to produce these passions."[47]

It is instructive that in key sections of his *Enquiry*, Burke would give "the properties of things" precedence over the ideas or feelings that they generated, for as was true for the writings of many of his contemporaries in the crucial 1750s and 1760s, a turn to matters of taste was also an attempt to account for the meaning and nature of trade or the production of wealth. Indeed, for theorists such Adam Smith, there was an intractable bond between utility and pleasure. A concern with beauty and taste, Smith noted in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, was "often

the secret motive of the most serious and important pursuits of both private and public life."[48] And it is not incidental that the theories of taste propounded by Burke and Smith, powerful men with vested interests in matters of empire and governmentality, were haunted by the materiality of social life, especially the excessive values generated by luxurious living. Taste was not the path to transcendence, but a centrifugal force that enabled subjects to confront a world of social energies and desires. Taste, and the realm of the senses in general, would become "active, energetic, almost carnal; a matter of immediate sensation, whether culinary or sexual."[49]

What I will be calling the culture of taste in this book, then, is a general reference to a set of practices and ideas that are now considered central to British society in the eighteenth century but are particularly associated with the middle decades of the period. The literature on the emergence of taste as a cultural category and the theories informing it is now extensive, and my goal is to pinpoint those aspects that would ultimately make the category of taste a key mediator between British modernity and what I will call its repressive tendencies—namely, the attempt to use culture to conceal the intimate connection between modern subjectivity and the political economy of slavery.[50]

Briefly, the project of taste was intended to overcome the traditional dissociation of culture, considered to be an object of "aesthetic veneration," from the "profane commodity" that was its condition of possibility.[51] The reconciliation of these two spheres of social life—that of culture and the commodity—was necessitated by the radical commercialization of British society in the eighteenth century and the transformation of consumption into a distinctive social value. The expansion of empire and trade led to consumer revolution in Britain in the eighteenth century as "more men and women than ever before in human history enjoyed the experience of acquiring material possessions."[52] What was new was not just the individual's desire to consume expensive goods, but also his or her ability to have access to new objects of consumption, many of them produced in the empire. The massive expansion of trade triggered what Neil McKendrick has described as "such a convulsion of getting and spending, such an eruption of new prosperity, and such an explosion of new production and marketing techniques, that a greater proportion of the population than in any previous society in human history was able to enjoy the pleasures of buying consumer goods." No longer limited to the purchase of basic necessities but also "decencies and luxuries," consumption would generate a radical transformation in behavior and social attitudes.[53]

But the new structure of consumption would provoke an even more important transformation in the domain of what would later come to be

known as high culture. For where one would have expected culture to be denied its claim to exclusiveness by its ties to commerce, especially in an age when aesthetic debates revolved around the autonomy of art, the commercialization of culture actually led to its revaluation. Paradoxically, culture acquired new value because it was now considered to be a commodity. At the same time, as diverse forms of entertainment became available and accessible to the public, the sphere of culture was expanded across class and gender lines. Previously considered antithetical, commerce and culture began to be reconciled, or to maintain the illusion of comity.[54] By 1753, when William Hogarth published his *Analysis of Beauty*, "written with a view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste," a new idiom, one revolving around ideas of civility and manners, now occupied the center of debates about British identity.[55]

There were two salient indicators of the ascendance of a culture of taste and its irruption into the public domain: one was the saturation of the common culture by discourses about taste and ancillary categories such as beauty and manners; the other was the expression, and later overcoming, of the traditional opposition between commerce and virtue. From the publication of Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), continuing with Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Originals of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), and ending with Archibald Alison's *Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), a primary, though not exclusive, concern of British intellectuals was the invocation of taste as a cognate for a set of cultural practices that were expected to provide stability in an age of change and crisis. A culture of taste, it was assumed, would serve as what Robert W. Jones has aptly called a "discursive counter."[56] In effect, taste was elevated into a political discourse through which other concerns of the age, including its anxiety about commerce, could be processed, mediated, and regulated.[57] The entry of the category of taste into the domain of politics—and of politics in the field of manners—signaled a larger transformation of British society during this period, one that cut across genders, social classes, and even regions, informing and ultimately transforming all of them.[58] By the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, for example, birthright and rank were no longer considered to be the golden standards in determining modes of behavior or social relationships. Where before social rank had been the determinant of one's position in society, the consumption of culture now determined the character and quality of the self.[59]

As most of the major novels of the eighteenth century illustrate vividly, money, rather than rank, had become the major mediator of social relationships, the authorized agent of regulating behavior.[60] Rather than serving as the immutable marker of class boundaries, taste had become

an agent for prying the old class system; the upper ranks now seemed open to people with money and education; the availability of imports, such as East Indian textiles, provided greater choices of dress and furnishings; and, of course, colonial wealth reinvented the category of the gentleman.[61] The disappearance of sumptuary laws during this period was a visible indicator of how far-reaching and deep these changes were, for when consumption, which was tied to the ability to pay for goods and services, was accepted as the arbiter of social standing, there was no longer an impetus to maintain hierarchy by statute. Indeed, sumptuary laws, which had instituted dress to denote social station, were now considered an affront to liberty.[62]

But the process of reconciling commerce and taste also created deep anxieties. For one, it generated an "orgy of spending," and this came to be presented as a sign of the excesses associated with new money. The general feeling was that the radical transformations in private behavior triggered by consumption had the potential to disrupt the social order.[63] It seemed as if there was no longer a common standard by which to judge behavior; the age of politeness lived under the shadow of excess, leading Sir Richard Steele to worry that "the most polite Age" was "in danger of being the most vicious."[64] Commerce and commercialization, figures of aggressive acquisitiveness and free spending, seemed to be at odds with the doctrine of politeness and regulated behavior that was at the core of the culture of taste. Moreover, there was a suspicion that commerce, lacking an inherent moral value in itself, needed a set of principles to regulate it, to ameliorate its roughness, and to harmonize it with the ideals of virtue that were central to how the culture imagined itself. This is why debates about art, culture, the aesthetic, or taste in the early eighteenth century seemed constantly driven by a torsion of anxiety created by the drive for consumption, expanding trade, and the need to regulate behavior. There was a need for a new cultural space where these two components would overcome their dialectical and diametrical nature and become part of a totality in which the ideals of a modern identity would be rehearsed, replayed, and affirmed. But where would this space be located, and what would be its nature?

In 1675 King Charles had forbidden the operation of coffeehouses in England, arguing that these houses of leisure, later to emerge as the new centers of the new culture of taste, were distracting tradespeople from their businesses, leading to indolence, and spreading malicious and scandalous reports that led "to the defamation of his Majesty's government and to the disturbance of the peace and quiet of the realm."[65] By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, coffeehouses and other places of leisure, including operas and luxury gardens, were being recognized not as dens of sedition but as regulatory forums.

Coffeehouses, however, were just the outward symbol of a larger revolution in the British public sphere. From the end of the seventeenth century onward, the project of British political and aesthetic philosophy was primarily the search for, and development of, discursive practices and principles that would be able to govern conduct in an age when old standards were out of joint with the new order of commerce. This was a time when what had been assumed to be Augustan order barely concealed often bitter and confused debates "over the relations between reason, virtue, and passion."[66] Within the confusions and debates that underlay the surface equanimity of the Augustan order, discourses about taste became "part of the search for new social standards and new forms of regulating behavior."[67] Concerned that indulgence, the inevitable consequence of unregulated consumption, was fatal to the body and mind and that "luxury, riot, and debauch" were "contrary to the true enjoyment of life," the Earl of Shaftesbury would embark on an aesthetic project in which the principle of private pleasure would be subordinated to and enhanced by social good or public virtue.[68]

But the acceptance of taste as a regulatory mechanism had not come about without doubt. For most of the 1750s, writers on taste had been preoccupied with the amorphousness of the concept itself: how could a category such as taste, or even ancillary ones such as civility and beauty, be asked to perform such important cultural work and yet be surrounded by "great inconsistence and contrariety"?[69] That was the question posed by David Hume in 1757 as he tried to figure out whether such a subjective category as beauty could be judged on the basis of unanimous rules:

> The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same. There are certain terms in every language, which import blame, and others praise; and all men, who use the same tongue, must agree in the application of them. Every voice is raised in applauding elegance, propriety, simplicity, spirit in writing; and in blaming fustian, affectation, coldness, and a false brilliancy: But when critics come to particulars, this seeming unanimity vanishes, and it is found, that they have affixed a very different meaning to their expression.[70]

The problem that was bothering Hume in "Of the Standard of Taste"—how to establish standards of taste in the face of subjective responses to phenomena—seemed to trouble a significant number of British philosophers and literary critics in the middle of the eighteenth century. This problem had bothered Samuel Johnson in 1751 as he reflected on the vagueness and undifferentiated nature of beauty, "different in different minds and diversified by time or place."[71] And in his *Enquiry*, Burke constantly worried about the lack of "concurrence in any uniform or settled principals which relate to taste"; concerned that "the term taste like all

figurative terms" was not "extremely accurate," he thought it was "liable to uncertainty and confusion."[72] Concerned that the word *beauty* was surrounded by "a confusion of ideas" that made "our reasonings upon subjects of this kind "extremely inaccurate and inconclusive," Burke, like Hogarth, wanted to fix the standards of taste. This could be done, he averred, "from a diligent examination of our passions in our own breasts; from a careful survey of the properties of things which we find by experience to influence those passions; and from a sober and attentive investigation of the laws of nature, by which those properties are capable of affecting the body, and thus of exciting our passions. If this could be done, it was imagined that the rules deducible from such an enquiry might be applied to the imitative arts, and to whatever else they concerned, without much difficulty."[73]

But by the end of the eighteenth century, a consensus seemed to emerge on the role of manners, taste, beauty, and sensibility in the making of the new social order. At this time, Burke would confidently declare that manners were not only of more importance than laws but were also its foundation: "Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and colour to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them."[74] A free market economy, it was assumed, enhanced freedom "by deepening consumption down through the social spectrum."[75]

4

The march of the culture of taste toward clarity, unanimity, and utility had to overcome significant roadblocks that constitute an important context for my discussion. The most obvious roadblock to the project of reconciling commerce and taste was that in order for high culture to have value as an exclusive category, it needed to draw and maintain distinct symbolic boundaries. These boundaries were of two kinds. The first one was structural: as Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier have noted, the very idea of high culture as the preserve of elites has often depended on its mobilization "to evaluate or signal status or to create status groups and monopolize privileges."[76] The second roadblock was symbolic and conceptual: high culture was enabled by the expansion of trade and the rise of industrialization, but in order to come into being as a separate sphere it had to negate its connection to the competitive and often ruthless world of commerce.[77] Still, attempts to delink culture from its deep roots in commerce were constantly thwarted by groups whose

relationship to the reigning doctrines was considered marginal or tangential. Women, for example, served as "a persistent reminder of the libidinal energies which the culture could unleash and which were so difficult to control."[78] My book will add slaves to the calibration of repression and denial.

A first step in this direction is to recognize the dialectical relationship between culture and commerce, to underscore the fact that in the long eighteenth century, culture had come to be valued because it was a commodity, and commodities had became treasured as cultural objects. The most prominent case of the mutual enhancement of commodity and culture was the pottery business associated with Josiah Wedgwood, based at Stoke-on-Trent. Wedgwood's success arose from both his technical mastery of porcelain and his sense of the market. He realized that pottery had acquired aesthetic value and was treasured for its fashionability rather than its innate merit; he also understood that irrespective of their utility and function, his products would be valued because of the economic power and prestige of the class that consumed them—"the monarchy, the nobility, and the art connoisseurs."[79] Firmly established within the domain of commerce, Wedgwood set out to expand the horizon of art, to reconcile utility and aesthetic value. Through his close collaboration with Joseph Wright of Derby, for example, Wedgwood would "secure royal and aristocratic patronage to secure the social cachet of his wares" and then hire artists like Wright to embody his enterprise in art.[80] While other artists of the age, most prominently William Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds, needed to produce treatises in order to justify the place of art in a commercial culture, Wedgwood and Wright seemed almost oblivious to the inherited assumption that art and commerce were mutually exclusive.[81]

And Wedgwood did not just have a cunning sense of the interlock of the work of art and commerce; he also had a proper understanding of fashionable markets wherever he could find them—in the dining rooms of the wealthy as well as in the hearts of abolitionists—and it is this keen sense of the market of objects and feelings that assured the success of both his china and antislavery emblems.[82] Wedgwood understood how sensibility itself could emerge from the intersection of art, commerce, and social protest and how feelings themselves could be presented in the marketplace. Nowhere is this linkage between the work of art, sensibility, and the market more apparent than in the medallion Wedgwood produced for the Quaker-led Society for the Abolition of Slavery in 1788 (fig. 1.5). To the extent that the medallion was not intended for monetary gain, it is not accurate to say that Wedgwood had tailored the feelings evoked by this piece for the marketplace; and yet there is clear evidence that, as with his famous porcelain, he had cast this work to reach the largest

1.5 Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, jasper
medallion decorated with a slave in chains
and inscribed with "Am I not a Man and a
Brother." 1790s. Ceramic. English School
(eighteenth century).

audience possible. When he sent the medallion to Benjamin Franklin in
Philadelphia in February 1788, Wedgwood expressed the hope that it
would lead to the final completion of the cause against slavery and usher
in "an epoch before unknown to the World," giving relief to millions of
slaves, who were its immediate objects of representation, so that "the
subject of freedom [would] be more canvassed and better understood in
the enlightened nations."[83] The medallion, Franklin was to note, had an
effect "equal to that of the best written Pamphlet, in procuring favour to
those oppressed People."[84]

But in this interplay of culture and commodities, much more was at
stake than the incorporation of the lived experience of slavery into the
sphere of art. As I have already noted, the overwhelming desire for re-
finement in the eighteenth century signified the emergence of new kinds
of British subjectivities and modes of regulating the social order. When
Archibald Alison argued, in an essay published in 1790, that the fine arts
produced "the emotions of taste," a set of feelings and a form of propriety
that could be distinguished from more unruly passions such as sexual
desire and materialism, he was endorsing a view shared by the major
artists, writers, and intellectuals of the period.[85] From Edmund Burke to
Oliver Goldsmith, the work of art, rather than systems of logic or ratio-
nality (the other major categories and concerns of the age), was placed
at the center of all social relations and became the key to understanding
human nature. Now it was assumed that culture and commerce were
twinned in the process of producing new subjects: commerce enabled
culture, art, and taste, which were, in turn, deployed as modes of cultiva-
tion and politeness, differentiating the subject of taste from the savagery

and barbarism of a previous time and of other cultures and experiences. This differentiation would be achieved through a process of repression and denial in which those who didn't fit into the structures of feelings and institutional practices associated with taste were left out of its domain altogether.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the most prominent advocates of a culture of taste posited their task as, first and foremost, the promotion of sensibility and politeness as the counterpoint to the uncouthness of trade, and the presentation of the former as the determinative value. In other words, rather than providing the impetus for the destructiveness of body and mind that worried Shaftesbury, commerce and consumption would be chaperoned by politeness, a set of expectations in which individuals would be enjoined to control their passions. Consequently, politeness would become a social mandate, the demand that individuals give up excessive or unruly desires, the libidinal forms of acquisitiveness and competition, and establish "harmony with a properted society."[86] It is this quest for harmony that led Adam Smith to conclude that the end of pleasure and happiness was not simply utilitarian, as his fellow Scot David Hume had argued, but was "the regular and harmonious movement of the system": "The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble, of which the attainment is well worth all the toil and anxiety which we are so apt to bestow upon it."[87] Smith's goal was to bring the pleasure principle, the police, and the extension of trade and manufacture into one social whole; in the regime of sense and sensibility, means and ends would be synchronized. His observations here are worth quoting in detail:

> The same principle, the same love of system, the same regard to the beauty of order, of art and contrivance, frequently serves to recommend those institutions which tend to promote the public welfare. When a patriot exerts himself for the improvement of any part of the public police, his conduct does not always arise from pure sympathy with the happiness of those who are to reap the benefit of it. It is not commonly from a fellow-feeling with carriers and waggoners that a public-spirited man encourages the mending of high roads. When the legislature establishes premiums and other encouragements to advance the linen or woollen manufactures, its conduct seldom proceeds from pure sympathy with the wearer of cheap or fine cloth, and much less from that with the manufacturer or merchant. The perfection of police, the extension of trade and manufactures, are noble and magnificent objects. The contemplation of them pleases us, and we are interested in whatever can tend to advance them. They make part of the great system of government, and the wheels of the political machine seem to move with more harmony and ease by means of

them. We take pleasure in beholding the perfection of so beautiful and grand a system, and we are uneasy till we remove any obstruction that can in the least disturb or encumber the regularity of its motions. All constitutions of government, however, are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole use and end. From a certain spirit of system, however, from a certain love of art and contrivance, we sometimes seem to value the means more than the end, and to be eager to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, rather from a view to perfect and improve a certain beautiful and orderly system, than from any immediate sense or feeling of what they either suffer or enjoy.[88]   *Icon; of moral feature ?.*

Central to Smith's project, then, was the belief that what lay at the heart of the civilizing process—and modern identity in general—was the recognition that commercial activities (the means) were not anterior to cultural refinement (the ends) but were indeed constitutive of it. In this context, even Hume's utilitarianism seemed appropriate, because it recognized that the effectuation of the arts and a flourishing of commerce enabled each other, that the existence of a thriving marketplace made cultural refinement possible. More specifically, Hume recognized that commercial work, represented by the industrial and mechanical arts, produced the refined liberal self: "Industry and refinement in the mechanical arts generally produce some refinements in the liberal; nor can one be carried to perfection, without being accompanied, in some degree, with the other. The same age, which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets, usually abounds with skilful weavers, and ship-carpenters. . . . The spirit of the age affects all the arts; and the minds of men, being once roused from their lethargy and put into fermentation, turn themselves on all sides, and carry improvements into every art and science."[89] Here we can witness the consolidation of a discourse in which art and its appreciation would provide a mode of managing the world engendered by commerce. My focus is on what was excluded from the discourse of taste and the series of omissions, repressions, and conceptual failures that were its condition of possibility.

5

Leading scholars of consumption and culture in Britain, from John Plumb and Neil McKendrick to Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, have noted how significant acts of denial or negation came to function as the raison d'être for the emergence of culture or leisure as social categories.[90] Moreover, discursive and philosophical debates on the period have tended to uphold Howard Caygill's argument that British writers, having accepted

taste as a faculty of judgment, came to be caught between the tensions
that informed rationality and sensibility as conceptual categories; the dis-
course on the nature and function of taste ended up turning it into "an
intangible medium of exchange between the rational will of providence
and the irrational individual sentiment."[91] A culture of taste informed by
denial became disembodied. The study of gender and race has been one
important site in which these acts of denial and disembodiment have been
confronted and exposed. Brewer has noted, for example, how women
functioned as "a persistent reminder of the libidinal energies which the
culture could unleash and which were difficult to control."[92] New and
revisionist historians of the eighteenth century have rediscovered "after
decades of comparative neglect, the imperial dimensions of British domes-
tic culture, politics, and social relations are starting to come into focus,
significantly revising our conceptualization of Englishness and Britishness
and the categories through which 'colonizers' and 'colonized' are under-
stood."[93] Drawing on both poststructuralist and postcolonial theory, the
"new" eighteenth-century studies has led to "the revision or problematiza-
tion of period, canon, tradition, and genre in eighteenth-century studies."[94]

My book continues but also revises the terms of this questioning of
repressed others in the making of modernity and the culture of taste.
Indeed, a central argument in this chapter and the rest of this book will
be that while a grammar of restitution—that is, the recovery of what
has previously been neglected or elided in previous discourses—has made
imperial margins indispensible to our understanding of Britishness, it has
not fully accounted for the specific role of slavery and blackness in the
shaping of the ideas and ideals of taste. For when we focus on questions
of taste in relation to slavery, what we encounter is not simply the denial
of a specific mode of commerce that was necessary for the consumption
of culture, or even the censoring of others out of the new order of civility
and virtue, but their careful orchestration as part of this order, in absen-
tia, on the margins, but still part of a presence, what Derrida would call
a trace, both inside and outside the system, a residue of what exists but
cannot be acknowledged.[95] The trace is the signifier of at least four para-
doxes that are crucial to understanding the relation between the presence
of taste and the absence of slavery in the manifest discourse of modern
subjectivity.

Paradox 1: Presence/Absence

Others—women, slaves, and the poor—were not totally excluded from
the discourse of modern identity; rather, they were deployed in a sub-
liminal, subordinate, or suppressed relation to the culture of taste. Con-
sider, for example, the Earl of Shaftesbury's discourse on the aesthetic: it

promoted the cult of the gentleman as the custodian of taste and in the process seemed to exclude the lower classes from the elevated culture of sensibility. And yet the lower classes were not entirely excluded from the moral geography of civility, for Shaftesbury recognized that the poor constituted a crucial counterpoint for the ideal gentleman. A gentleman, he contended, was a person who held values at odds with the "the vulgar habits of the people as well as the luxurious living identified with the court."[96] Similarly, although there were many aesthetic and moral constraints on how the poor could be represented in English landscape paintings in the eighteenth century, the rural poor could not be totally excluded from the domain of art; indeed, as John Barrell has noted in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, they became essential to the decor "of the drawing rooms of the polite."[97] Here, the very social classes that were considered to be outside the domain of taste functioned as counterpoints to the ideals of polite behavior or even as figures of desire; that which was outside the manifest framework of the dominant cultural signifiers was essential to their meaning.

Paradox 2: Pain and Beauty

This paradox, which has been discussed at length by Marcus Wood in his study of the iconography of slavery, is related to the larger relationship between art and the regime of punishment and pain: "How can aesthetic criteria be applied to describe the torture and mass destruction of our own kind? How is it possible to make something beautiful out of, and to perceive beauty within, something which has contaminated human values to such a degree as to be beyond the assumed idealisations of truth and art, beyond the known facts and beyond the manipulations of rhetoric?"[98] Slaves could occupy important symbolic roles in English portraiture as figures of status; erotic black figures would be part of massive projects commissioned by colonial governors, such as Sir William Young of the Windward Islands; and supporters of abolitionism, most notably Wedgwood and William Blake, would deploy the figure of the suffering black in support of their cause, but the question of how the enslaved could be represented in images whose goal was to elicit pleasure would continue to persist.[99]

Paradox 3: Slavery in Absentia

Slavery was referred to as the "peculiar institution," but nowhere was this peculiarity more obvious than in Britain itself. Were there slaves in Britain? The question might appear misplaced given the active role of Britain in the purchase, transportation, and sale of African slaves from the 1560s

to 1807, but within the domestic English space itself, the presence of slavery and the kind of moral demands it made on subjects of taste is more complicated than one might first assume. Now, it is true that slavery was woven into the British social fabric in diverse ways: British subjects and agents were actively involved in the slave trade, in the settlement and development of the slave colonies, and later played an influential role in the abolition of the slave trade and the development of a powerful antislavery discourse. In short, slavery was preponderant abroad, in the British colonies, and clearly evident at home. In fact, the question of slavery was central to British domestic politics and the shaping of the identity of the United Kingdom.

But as James Walvin has noted, black slaves in Britain "did not occupy the crucial economic role created for them in the slave colonies" and they were not subject to the regimes of brutality and terror that created the chasm between art and enslavement that was a marked feature of the American colonies.[100] From a visual and existential perspective, this situation would be startling. Where one would expect slaves to be subjects in chains or bolts, under spatial constraint, or even functioning under a brutal regimen of labor, slaves in England were often considered to be "a popular and prestigious acquisition as domestic servants," often working in households at the highest levels of society, including that of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield.[101] The existence of slavery in absentia would make it difficult to conceptualize or represent slaves as a visual and palpable ingredient of British society, but as I will show in subsequent chapters, slavery was part of the political unconscious of Britishness.[102]

Paradox 4: African Slavery and English Freedom

There is, of course, a glaring gap between the reality of slavery and the ideals of English freedom, and the fact that they were products of the same moment is one of the initial questions that prompted this study. For it is indeed ironic that the growth of the African slave trade was taking place at a time when "the institutions of bondage" had all but disappeared from English society; slavery became part of the economic mandate of Englishness in a period when the unique identity of England was premised on ideals of unquestioned freedom and an assumption, shared even by slave traders themselves, that "slavery was the worst of human conditions."[103] As Walvin has observed, the West Indian empires, the source of much of the wealth and prestige that was concordant with the culture of taste, were established in the period that "saw the assertion of important political and human rights" in England:

> As more and more Englishmen came to pride themselves on their newly won rights, at precisely that time Englishmen constructed a fabric of colonial slave

society which was specifically designed to relegate the black below the level of humanity. Furthermore, because of the economic and political ties between metropolis and colonies, the two systems of law—English and colonial—often overlapped and frequently clashed. Nowhere was this more apparent than on the question of slavery. On the face of it the chattel status of imported slaves was at variance with the spirit and even the letter of English law. It was this problem which was to tax English courts until the early nineteenth century.[104]

6

My overall approach to the subject of slavery in a culture of taste will revolve around these four paradoxes. One of the arguments that I will be developing in this book, especially in the first half, is that although African slavery was rarely taken up as a central issue in the discourse of taste, it did not constitute what Michel Foucault would call "a fundamental prohibition"; on the contrary, enslavement was the "disquieting enigma" in the culture of sensibility.[105] Conversely, as I argue in the second half of the book, although slaves rarely engaged directly with the debates and practices about sense and sensibility and appear impervious to the questions about taste taking place in British drawing rooms, their modes of cultural behavior were crafted and elaborated under the shadow of the domain of taste, from which they had been excluded. Like women and the poor in England, the slave—and slavery itself—was confined to a shadow existence on the margins of the discourse of cultured subjects, but it is within these margins that we must recover the power of negativity.

In fact, it is when we think about the power of negativity that we can properly recognize the interstices in which the discourse of modern identity itself emerged. A culture of taste had no choice but to acknowledge the powerful, inevitable, and inescapable connection between culture and commerce, but it also needed to hold on to an idea of culture that was not subordinated to the forces of production. To use Marx's parlance, advocates of taste wanted culture to be both a base and a superstructure, to connect with existing forms of social production but also maintain their idealism.[106] But the high priests of taste ended up with a floating signifier—a "middle term whose status is indeterminate and difficult to define."[107] For in the double interstices, or the dialect of commerce and taste, the idea of culture first had to be extricated from commerce, be purified of its social residues, and then be reinstituted as the informing value.

My goal in this book is not to rewrite the cultural history of modern Europe or even to reconfigure the relation between centers and margins; rather, I am trying to make the case, in a narrower but specific sense, for slavery as one of the informing conditions of modern identity. But I also

want to call attention to what it meant for slavery itself to be transformed into a modern category. And in order to sustain this argument, I need to establish the structural relationship between enslavement and forms of social identity, both ancient and modern. A good starting point here is to acknowledge that slavery was not a new development in the European imagination, or human society for that matter, nor was it an anachronistic development in the so-called civilizing process. As Christopher Miller has observed in his study of the literature and culture of the slave trade in the Francophone world, slavery and the slave trade are not synonymous, but they are part of a powerful dialectic: "There could be no slave trade without slavery, yet slavery continued after the slave trade . . . the two institutions were inseparable, since each fed and perpetuated the other."[108]

For cultural purists, a concern with slavery and taste would appear to be far-fetched since, as I will show in the next chapter, the abjection of the former always appeared to negate the ideals and claims of the latter. Indeed, given the investment modern society has made in the ideal of cultural purity, slavery could appear to be the greatest danger and threat to the self-understanding of the modern subject as civil and virtuous.[109] This explains why in what were considered to be isolated centers of white civilization, such as the cities of the antebellum South, culture needed to be symbolically quarantined from African slaves, who were associated with dirt and defilement. Here, slaves were considered to be categories of persons who embodied abstract ideas about impurity and contamination; in the slave plantations of the Americas, slaves were associated with a noxious order, one that had the capacity to defile civilized subjects.[110]

But to understand ritual contamination, it is important to probe the sources and uses of this terminology. We need to know, in the words of Mary Douglas, "who is issuing accusations of defilement and who is the accused," for unless "we can trace which categories of social life are being kept apart, how they are ranked and who is being excluded, the usual analysis of defilement is blocked."[111] In this instance, we must remember that although slavery and the civilizing process were separated on the symbolic level, they were powerfully connected in the everyday world of modern life. Furthermore, as an institution, slavery had always been part of how cultures understood and defined their understanding and conceptualization of civilization. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that in many human societies, in all geographical areas of the world, there has been an intimate connection between a sense of cultural achievement and superiority and the practice of domination.

As an institution, slavery has often been associated with cultural capital. Moses Finley, the distinguished classicist, once noted that "there was no action or belief or institution in Graeco-Roman antiquity that was

not one way or other affected by the possibility that someone involved *might* be a slave."[112] And in his exploration of ideas of slavery from Aristotle to Augustine, Peter Garnsey observed that although slavery was perhaps not a "universal or typical labor system" in the Mediterranean world, "it can hardly be dismissed as marginal, if it was embedded in the society and economy of Athens, the creator of a rich and advanced political culture, and of Rome, the most successful empire-builder the world had thus far known."[113] The West Indian and antebellum aristocracy invested heavily in developing fences to quarantine white civilization from what was considered African barbarism, but they could not avoid rehearsing and reaffirming the claim that there was an innate connection between slaveholding and cultural achievement. Often the cultural status and intellectual lineage of the British and American planter classes depended on their claim that the enslavement of Africans gave slaveholders the authority and gravitas of antiquity. For example, George Frederick Holmes, the son of a British planter and official in Demerara, educated at England's Durham University, was considered "the most brilliant and creative of the proslavery school," and, like his peers, he drew on Aristotle's ideas on natural slavery to justify the institution of bondage in the American South.[114] The people whom Garnsey has described as "the proslave theorists of the old south" embraced ancient Athens and Rome "as the standard-bearers of classical civilization and understandably called them up in support of their cause, along with the Biblical slaveowning societies of ancient Israel and early Christianity."[115] In his *Sociology for the South*, first published in 1854, George Fitzhugh would claim that domestic slavery had "produced the same results in elevating the character of the master that it did in Greece and Rome"; he compared the nobility of leading Southern aristocrats like George Washington and John Calhoun to that of Greek and Roman senators, insisting that both had been ennobled by slaveholdings.[116]

During the debates on the future of slavery in the United States in the 1830s, an anonymous Southern clergyman provided the most succinct connection between slavery and civilization, arguing that the institution of slavery "ever has been and ever will be the only sure foundation of all republican governments."[117] The clergyman had a point: ancient civilizations assumed that slavery was a key fulcrum in communal organization, part of an elaborate political and symbolic economy, and the authorizing agent of claims to cultural superiority. In addition to Greece and Rome, slavery was one of the major sources of political and cultural capital in the Middle East, Africa, India, and China. In sub-Saharan Africa, undoubtedly the major casualty of modern slavery, the rise of the great kingdoms of the Sahel—Mali, Ghana, and Songhai—depended on the

control of the lucrative slave routes of the region. Great empire builders and cultural heroes of African resistance to colonialism, such as Samouri Toure, are still remembered in West Africa as slave raiders.[118]

There were, of course, important differences between ancient and new forms of slavery, both in terms of their organizing principles and the ideas informing them, but modern slavery presented particular difficulties to European society, because it emerged in an age when legal bondage had disappeared in the cultures that were most active in the slave trade. The Atlantic slave trade thrived at a temporal juncture in which modern identity was predicated on the question of freedom and in an era when subjectivity depended on the existence of free and self-reflective subjects. As a modern institution, slavery was anachronistic simply because it seemed to be at odds with the aspirations of the age; however, it provided the economic foundation that enabled modernity.[119] And yet, and perhaps because of this anachronism, slavery informed and haunted the culture of modernity in remarkable ways; its infiltration of the governing categories, from morality and the law, natural history, and even discourses on the nature of the self, was unprecedented.

Slavery constituted the ghost or specter that would "mark the very existence of Europe," informing but also displacing "its great unifying projects."[120] And nowhere was this informing and haunting more dramatic and vivid than in the American colonies, where slavery was so palpable, so visible, and so phenomenal that it could not be buried in an underground economy of representation. Here, where slave owners considered themselves to be subjects of freedom, where migration and settlement had often been generated by the desire for even greater freedom, the existence of others as slaves was always necessary but also disturbing. Quite often, debates on the nature of African slavery in the new world were prefaced by the necessity to affirm the distinctiveness of an English identity that had to account for its presence and prescience in zones of displacement and enslavement.

To put it another way, the greatest anxieties about freedom were often expressed by those invested in the enslavement of others as if they, the free, might fall into the condition that sustained their lives. Thus a Maryland statute of 1639 would define the settlers of the tobacco colony as Christians who were entitled to the liberties, immunities, privileges and customs "as any naturall born subject of England."[121] In a now famous address to Oliver Cromwell, the Assembly of Barbados defined itself as a body of "Englishmen of as clear and pure extract as any" entitled to "liberty and freedom equal with the rest of our countrymen."[122] And in the 1650s, "a number of royalist sympathizers taken by the Protectorate and sold in Barbados described their situation to Parliament as slavery (and therefore, because they were English, unjust) without betraying any

awareness of the condition of the Africans with whom they must have worked."[123]

Two ironies mark what I will call the negative dialectic of slavery. The first one is that the existence of slavery clarified the meaning of freedom. As the English exiles in Barbados realized, freedom could best be imagined and desired when slavery was witnessed as its radical other. The second irony was that the most virulent demands for freedom in Europe were taking place at precisely that moment in the eighteenth century when it became "imperative to reconcile the revival of slavery in modern times with various theories of human progress."[124]

7

It is in response to the challenge presented by the cauldron of slavery in an age of freedom that new modes of scholarly interpretation have emerged to excavate forgotten histories and narratives of slavery and empire and to locate them at the center of European life. But what does it mean to recuperate the meaning and value of suppressed groups on the margins of the modern world system? How is the essential condition of marginalization, exclusion, and alienation retained in relation to undiminished centers? How do we read the fragmented, transient, and often deeply elusive presence of the slave, located on the margins of the world picture, acknowledging the enslaved as an indispensible source of labor, as a counterpoint to dominant ideas about society and social organization, yet recognizing that this other of modernity could perform its function only in exclusion, in absentia, and in disavowal?

When I started work on this book, these questions were much easier to address than they are now. Slavery was absent or only minimally present in the monumental works that sought to explore modern culture during a period defined by the so-called aesthetic turn in literary and cultural studies, just as empire was absent from the dominant histories of the period. The revisionary works by Laura Brown, Felicity Nussbaum, Linda Colley, and others mentioned earlier were just entering the mainstream of social history and cultural criticism; empire was making its way into the study of Britishness, but it had not yet come to be recognized as crucial to the formation of the issues that interested historians and cultural scholars of the period, questions about money, state formation, and art. There were still elements of empire that seemed to threaten the core center of modern European identity. Imperial questions could not be avoided, but they needed to be managed, contained, or excluded. At the time, this containment and exclusion took two forms. First, slavery and the imperial condition in which it functioned were considered peripheral

in the discourses that concerned themselves with the reconstruction of the moral and cultural geography of modern life. The most notorious example of this exclusion was Simon Schama's monumental book on the Dutch golden age, *The Embarrassment of Riches,* a work in which the most minute aspects of the Batavian temperament were scrutinized and presented without the slightest acknowledgment of how the riches that embarrassed were derived from the slave trade.[125] One was troubled by the fact that neither Schama's book, nor even the great cultural histories of European culture in the modern period, nor the monumental commentaries on the Enlightenment in various parts of Europe, nor the philosophical discourses of modernity, seemed able to incorporate slavery into their grand designs.[126]

There was a second register for excluding slavery and its ugliness from the narrative of modern identity: inherent in the so-called aesthetic turn, often posited as an alternative to cultural criticism, was a desire to recuperate the work of art as a sensual object transcending the violence and ugliness of modern life. This neo-Kantian turn to the aesthetic ideology, evident in Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* and Peter de Bolla's *Art Matters,* were driven by the belief that, faced with the ugliness of modern life, the self needed to turn to the sensual and pleasurable as the source of a redemptive aesthetic if not hermeneutics. In *On Beauty,* to use one prominent example, Scarry would locate the power of beauty in the "realm of sensation" and connect it to the "sacred" and "unprecedented"; the beautiful would thus be endowed with a deep auratic sense and powerful cognitive capacity: "The beautiful, almost without any effort of our own, acquaints us with the mental event of conviction, and so pleasurable a mental state is this that ever afterwards one is willing to labor, struggle, wrestle with the world to locate enduring sources of conviction—to locate what is true. Both in the account that assumes the existence of the immortal realm and in the account that assumes the nonexistence of the immortal realm, beauty is a starting place for education."[127] In *Art Matters,* de Bolla, whose previous book *The Discourse of the Sublime* had been a powerful accounting of the history of the modern subject, would now invoke the power of the aesthetic experience and locate it solidly in what he called a "poetics of wonderment" that was made distinct from "other forms of experience" through its "absolute divorce from the ordinary or everyday."[128] Yet, as my opening juxtaposition of Rembrandt's painting and Pedro Diez Troxxilla's slave receipt illustrates, the modern period was characterized by a tenuous relation between the aesthetic object and lived experience. How could Rembrandt and Troxxilla, living in the same city at the same time, occupying the same habitus, engage in a different set of economies (symbolic and real) and yet not be troubled by each other's presence?

My initial response to this question was to present my project as one of rectification. I would rectify what appeared to be the omissions of slavery and the phenomenology of blackness from the dominant histories and discourses of modernity by bringing the political economy of slavery into a direct confrontation with narratives about aesthetic judgment and taste in philosophy, social history, and cultural criticism. My objective was to locate slavery at the core of Englishness and debates about English identity and thus reconceive what was considered marginal to the project of modern self-making as essential to its identity. But this initial premise was preempted by the emergence of new revisionist studies in eighteenth-century culture and imperial history. Indeed, slightly earlier attempts to rethink the history of empire, most notably Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation* and Nussbaum and Brown's *The New Eighteenth Century,* had already begun to question traditional assumptions about the historiography of the period. Colley had noted how after 1707 the British came to define themselves as "a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores."[129] Others had turned to literary theory to try to pry eighteenth-century studies from what has come to be termed "a Whiggish teleology."[130]

The critique here was directed at the general insistence on a continuous and stable history and culture in the eighteenth century, one in which the relationship between centers and margins was intelligible and unchanging, one driven by what Nussbaum and Brown describe as "a political stability linked to an image of equivalent social and cultural coherence, to a sense of an unchallenged class hierarchy represented and perpetuated in a literary culture where aesthetics, ethics, and politics perfectly mesh."[131] Subsequent new histories of empire sought to undo this ideology of order and coherence to account for what has been described as "non-elite and non-western pasts" and to recognize empire as a site of interconnection and interdependence, and the search was on for a method to "disrupt oppositions between metropolis and colony and allow us to rethink the genealogies and historiographies of national belonging and exclusion."[132]

All of these new histories and studies brought about a significant correction, if not balance, in the study of the European self and its colonial others in several areas, which provides an important backdrop for my project. But they also raised a new set of questions and indeed seemed to redefine the problematic of difference in the culture of modernity in terms I did not always find adequate to the task of accounting for the figure of the slave in modern culture. Three of these problems are crucial to bringing the culture of taste and the political economy of slavery into a productive encounter: the tension between the epistemological framework and logic of the modern and the existential life of the enslaved

and colonized; the paradigm of difference in an age of cultural hybridity; and the problematic of race in general and blackness in particular in the elaboration of British theories of taste. Let me take each problem in turn.

The Epistemological Framework of Modernity

As I have already noted, the most compelling scholarly work on the culture of modernity has been driven by the imperative to recover the lives and experiences of subjects outside what has been described as "the political and epistemological models of Enlightenment and modernist Europe."[133] Revisionist histories and studies of modernity have not set out to undo epistemological frameworks as such; they are part of a project whose goal is to dilate their boundaries and terms of reference, to pluralize the range of experiences that are the objects of investigation, stepping out of the universalizing and universalized structures of knowledge to recover the signs of what Dror Warhman aptly calls "the unstructured institutions" that "underlay people's fundamental assumptions about who they were and who they could be."[134] And to the extent that epistemologies imply justified beliefs and knowable categories, they depend on visible experiences and stable entities—they need structured frameworks. Indeed, in Wahrman's *The Making of the Modern Self*, the pasts that are recovered from the margins were those that had left either "unself-conscious *traces*" or "unintended *marks*."[135] And these traces and marks would become historical when they were rewritten within a set of norms, brought under the rule of what Foucault once called a "procedural rationality."[136]

But traces are not enough. As I will show in the second half of this book, slaves left many traces and marks, both conscious and unconscious in form and nature. From birth to death, from occult practices to dance and fashion, there is no aspect of the experiences of African slaves in Europe and the Americas that has not been reconstructed through the traces they left behind and the glimpses of their lives that are available to us in the archive of the masters.[137] At the same time, however, the bodies of slaves, their lives, and their activities were considered to be outside the rationality of modernity and its normative order and thus outside the epistemological framework of the modern. This does not mean that the lives of slaves were not represented in the grid of modern identity. Slaves occupy an important part in the explanatory structures of modernity from natural history to the aesthetic. But they exist in this framework as proof of their incapacity for modern identity. They are, in effect, constituted as unmodern subjects or simply objects of modern trade. Concerning epistemological frameworks, then, the following question remains outstanding and inescapable: What are we to make of the faint traces of the slaves

and the marks that are often only available to us through the narratives of their masters? How do we speak of those events and experiences that Toni Morrison identifies as the disturbing element of "black surrogacy"?[138] Or as Joan Dayan asks in *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, how are we to deal with "those reactions that did not get written down?"[139]

These questions have been asked by others in different forms. In *Contradictory Omens* Jamaican poet and historian Kamau Brathwaite was one of the first to raise the question of visibility and invisibility in the slaves' articulation of their existence in relation to the dominant world of masters who had written massive histories with the goal of affirming the inhumanity of the slave within the rational order of the Enlightenment.[140] In her provocative essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Hortense Spillers reflects on the consequences of the slaves' "veritable descent into the loss of communicative force."[141] Who tells the stories of the enslaved and how are they told? That is the question raised by Jenny Sharpe in the *Ghosts of Slavery*?[142] And making her way into the archive of slavery, Saidiya Hartman would discover that nothing in her training had prepared her for the invisible and the phantasmal, "those who had left no record of their lives and whose biography consisted of the terrible things said about them or done to them."[143]

I cite these books on slavery by literary and cultural scholars not to privilege one discipline over another but to call attention to two further points. First, the history or story of slavery that is told and circulated functions under the rubric of a disciplinary order, each part of which has its own claims and counterclaims, openings and closures. Culture and literary scholars like those cited above—and I include myself in this category as well—will not contribute much in terms of epistemology if by this term we mean "the categories that structure our thought, pattern our arguments and proofs, and certify our standards of explanation."[144] The questions that I find compelling will not have answers, evidence, or proof, nor will they satisfy any standard of explanation, because my objects of analysis—slavery and enslavement—are surrounded by silence and are submerged under what Patrick Chamoiseau, the Martinican novelist, has called a "web of memories which scorch us with things forgotten and screaming presences."[145]

Second, it is clear to me that one of the reasons that slavery could not be included in the discourse of taste, even when it pervaded its cultural forms, is because it was not compatible with the epistemological categories that defined high culture. As I will show in several key moments in this book, the establishment of a realm of taste, or even the valorization of ideals of beauty, depended on systematic acts of excluding those considered to be outside the systems of explanation that were being established as social norms. My goal here is not to establish an alternative

normativity built around the marginalized, but to understand how the "formation of a vocabulary of the pure and impure" functioned as the linguistic and semantic foundation for modern identity.[146] I will be reading the figure of the slave as the informing yet interdicted symbolic in the representation of the culture of taste, outside or excessive of the epistemological framework of modernity.

But my refusal to privilege an epistemological framework should not be construed as obliviousness to the temporality of empire and its ever-changing boundaries. I recognize that theories and practices of empire changed often during the long history of the modern period, as did the general understanding of the condition of enslavement. Comprehending the plurality of empire is indeed essential to accounting for its omissions. Here I concur with those scholars, most notably Kathleen Wilson, who argue that there were many imperial projects in the Georgian period that were "engaged with by planters, reformers, merchants, explorers, missionaries, settlers, adventurers, indigenes, and the enslaved," and that there was "no universal colonial condition or imperial experience, but discrete practices of power and ways of imagining it in specific historical periods."[147] Within this changing empire, the condition of the slave in the public imagination would depend on shifting interests, ideologies, and practices. The slave who entered the realm of the British empire in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the trade was very much accepted as a quotidian aspect of imperial trade, was not the figure we would encounter at the end of the century or at the beginning of the nineteenth, when abolitionism transformed the terms of debate and representation. We will see these differences at play in what I have called the changing aura of blackness.

And yet the moral economy of slavery tended to retain some enduring and often singular elements. African slaves, often because of their color or other forms of difference, continued to occupy "a savage slot" in the European imagination.[148] English attitudes toward slavery were changing continuously, and quite often the most pernicious and brutal images of the Africans deployed by agents of the slave trade and its apologists coexisted with some of the most benign representations. At the same time, however, both of these images could be found in earlier periods, existing in an old and enduring archive of Africanism that could be deployed to respond to the contingencies of the moment. The violent images of the Africans in the works of slave agents such as Robert Norris and Archibald Dalzell, published at the end of the eighteenth century to mount a rearguard action against abolitionism, belonged to a specific moment in the 1790s, but they were also rehearsals of earlier portraits by an older generation of slave factors, most notably, William Bosman, whose words opened my reflections in this chapter.

If I seem to prefer working with emaciated temporal frames rather than epistemological frameworks, it is because I believe that working with a weak sense of history or with porous boundaries is one way of liberating the slave not from history but from the hold of historicism. Long ago, the planter class laid claim to historicism as one of its authorizing agents. Similarly, if I locate this book in what might seem to be an amorphous geography, it is not because I am not aware of the differences between the culture of taste in England and Scotland or Virginia, or because I am impervious to the variety of localities in which slavery operated and shaped its landscapes; rather, I want to underscore the large projects that animated both the project of Enlightenment (which posited itself as English, Scottish, and British, but also European) and the almost universal assumption that the enslaved African, whether he or she lived in Bristol, England, or Bristol, Jamaica, was the counterpoint to modernity itself.

The Paradigm of Difference

My project also sets out to rethink the paradigm of difference, without doubt a key concern of the new imperial histories, literary and global studies, and postcolonial theory. Difference has become a key paradigm in the project of rethinking modernity and Enlightenment. In fact, one could argue that nearly all revisionist and postmodern accounts of modern identity have been attempts to wage war against the totalitarianism of modern rationality by activating differences.[149] In literature and cultural studies, it is impossible to escape from the poststructuralist critique of Enlightenment rationality, its universal claims, and its rejection of what Jean-François Lyotard called metanarratives. In fact, Lyotard has defined the postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives," insisting, in his famous report to the government of Quebec, that the narrative function has lost its "its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal."[150] Writing in the same vein and spirit, Michel Foucault would pose the essential question for the West at the end of the colonial era: what right "did its culture, its science, its social organization have to laying claim to a universal validity?"[151] Here, the difference of the "Third World" would be deployed against "Reason—the despotic enlightenment."[152]

As I have already noted, revisionist accounts of modern British identity have sought to recover the repressed and unheroic histories of others, including women, slaves, workers, and to make them alternative factors in what are often presented as small stories. As scholars have sought to question and displace the mythical centers of Britishness and to undo the fulcrum that has sustained the mythology of English identity, cosmopolitanism, and empire, they have turned to the lives of those located on the

margins and peripheries of empire for evidence of the instability of the center.[153] A turn to the periphery of the eighteenth century thus becomes part of an attempt "to broaden and sharpen our perspectives on the period and its critical tradition as well" and to supply "a more inclusive view of the period than those which are limited to the dominant culture alone."[154] An axiom of difference reroutes the history of empire in terms best described by Catherine Hall in *Civilising Subjects*:

> The time of empire was the time when anatomies of difference were being elaborated, across the axes of class, race and gender. These elaborations were the work of culture, for the categories were discursive, and their meanings historically contingent. The language of class emerged as a way of making sense of the new industrial society in Britain of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The language of "separate spheres" became a common way of talking about and categorising sexual difference in this same period of transition. It was colonial encounters which produced a new category, race, the meanings of which, like those of class and gender, have always shifted and been contested and challenged. The Enlightenment inaugurated a debate about racial types, and natural scientists began to make human races an object of study, labouring to produce a schema out of the immense varieties of human life, within a context of relatively few physical variations.[155]

And a fundamental question remains unanswered here and elsewhere: could this idiom of difference escape the imperial center's capacity to generate and manage categories of alterity?

Empire, of course, produced alterity in order to secure the identity of the domestic self, and the paradigm of difference and hybridity that some critics now seem to endorse as a source of agency and restitution often functioned as a mechanism for consolidating the center in the face of the real or imagined danger posed by the other. We can take it as axiomatic that when the English, at home or abroad, turned to the identity of others, it was to reflect on, or even endorse, their own unique identities, that the space of alterity enabled what Edward Said has termed the "consolidated vision of empire."[156] Fictional accounts of Englishness in the modern period (and the same case could be made for earlier ones) were driven by the need to enhance the nature and meaning of Englishness against the symbolic danger represented by colonial others who, though barely visible, and confined to the margins of the discourse, enabled "those feelings, attitudes, and references" that located the domestic space at the center of an ever expanding global culture.[157] But if empire produced functional differences, how can a discourse of alterity now be deployed to deconstruct the hegemony of the imperial account and thus disperse its authority? And if slavery produced the first hybrid cultures in the modern period, how can this hybridity, one produced through interdiction and

violence, now be celebrated as a condition of postcolonial agency? And if the effect of colonial power was the production of hybridization, as Homi Bhabha has claimed, how can this same colonial hybridity have the capacity to unsettle "the demand that figures at the center of the originary myth of colonial power"?[158] And how do we avoid the trap of recuperating others merely as what Srinivas Aravamudan describes "as subordinates in some larger nationalist metanarrative" in which Britain remains central?[159]

On the Question of Blackness

The final critical problem, one that signals my major point of departure from revisionist histories of the modern period, concerns the complex racial markers of difference, the blackness that marked the slave as a slave because of his or her color. How does one write about the other as part of the technology of metropolitan identity and still underscore the fact that people conceived as others functioned as analogical figures of difference because they were considered to be part of the abnormal and pathological? How does one tell stories about an order of blackness that was essential to the maintenance of a modern European identity yet was considered so unruly that it needed to be controlled, displaced, or repressed if the modern self was to come to its own as a self-reflection subject of reason, of morality, and of taste? Clearly, the question of race in general and the problem of blackness in particular have to remain an intellectual site for continuing debates and controversies in the rethinking of modern identity. But in order to have a better understanding of the place and role of racialized bodies in making of the culture of taste, scholars should not lose sight of some difficult yet foundational questions: Was modernity itself a racialized category? Could modern slavery have existed outside a racialized economy?

That a powerful racial ideology was central to the theories and practices of modernity is not in doubt. The journey to modernity, whether from its imagined barbarism in the Middle Ages or to its high point in the eighteenth century, was conceived as the passage from an era that was impervious to difference to one in which difference was essential to the maintenance of identity. From Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the foundational narrative of modernity was the coming into being, or self-awareness, of a European self in relation to the other—the Moor, the Indian, or the savage. Difference was, of course, always an important part of Western identity, but it was in the modern period that it became essential to its core set of values.[160] Even where a moral economy of difference was not dramatized as the condition of possibility of European identity, a sense of separation from other forms

of meaning—be they secular or divine—characterized what Louis Dupré has called the passage to modernity, the removal of transcendence from structures of meaning and its replacement by a structure of separation:

> Whereas previously meaning had been established in the very act of creation by a wise God, it now fell upon the human mind to interpret a cosmos, the structure of which had ceased to be given as intelligible. Instead of being an integral part of the cosmos, the person became its source of meaning. Mental life separated from cosmic being: as meaning-giving "subject," the mind became the spiritual substratum of all reality. Only what it objectively constituted would count as real. Thus reality split into two separate spheres: that of the mind, which contained all intellectual determinations, and that of all other being, which received them.[161]

In the cultures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this split could be secularized and radicalized so that the discourse of Enlightenment, in spite of the universalism that has drawn the ire of philosophers of difference, depended on powerful binary oppositions for its maintenance. During this period, what had started as a system of classifying nature in the works of William Petty and Carl Linnaeus would coalesce into concepts of human difference explained by environmental, evolutionary, and developmental theories. And the need to justify or oppose slavery would lead to the racialization of difference in unprecedented ways. Indeed, one of the great ironies of the age of enlightenment is that it was in the later phase of the eighteenth century, when slavery was under attack by abolitionists and others, that racial economies seemed to circulate with the greatest vigor and venom.[162] But what appears most startling is that the more theories of modernity evolved in order to account for the unique identity of Europe, the more they needed the black to function as the pathological figure that would serve as a counterpoint to beauty, taste, and civic virtue. As Sander Gilman has noted, when writers in the age of Enlightenment turned to "speculations concerning basic principles of art, the function of such figures in theoretical contexts provided a clue to the comprehension of the exotic as well as of the specific role of the Black in eighteenth-century thought."[163]

Nowhere was the necessity of the black as the counterpoint to white visuality more marked than in debates on the physical and physiological nature of perception, a question central to eighteenth-century reflections on the distinction between what Gilman calls "acquired and innate responses to perceptual categories": was our sense of perceptual categories such as size, perspective, and color innate in ourselves as human beings or acquired through our education or formed habits?[164] Responses to and debates about this question came to revolve around the report of an experiment carried out by Dr. William Cheselden, one of the most

distinguished anatomists of the age, at St. Thomas's Hospital in London. Cheselden had carried out an operation on a boy with impaired sight and reported the transformations in his patient's conception of colors. Cheselden reported that after the operation the patient was forced to rethink his previously faint notion of colors: "Now Scarlet he thought the most beautiful of all Colours, and the others the most gay were the most pleasing, whereas the first time he saw Black, it gave him Uneasiness, yet after a little Time he was reconcil'd to it; but some Months after, seeing by Accident a Negroe Woman, he was struck with great Horror at the Sight."[165]

Cheselden's conclusion was that that since the boy had never seen a black woman before, and had hence not acquired the ability to associate blackness with ugliness through culture and instruction, his terror was immediate and intuitive; his fear of blackness was physiological, not social. In other words, on their opening, the boy's eyes had made an immediate, unmediated association of blackness with a set of negative values not acquired through social association. Cheselden's experiment had led Burke to conclude that blackness and darkness were made painful by "their natural operation, independent of any associations whatsoever":

> The horror, in this case, can scarcely be supposed to arise from any association. The boy appears by the account to have been particularly observing, and sensible for one of his age: and therefore, it is probable, if the great uneasiness he felt at the first sight of black had arisen from its connexion with any other disagreeable ideas, he would have observed and mentioned it. For an idea, disagreeable only by association, has the cause of its ill effect on the passions evident enough at the first impression; in ordinary cases, it is indeed frequently lost; but this is, because the original association was made very early, and the consequent impression repeated often. In our instance, there was no time for such an habit; and there is no reason to think, that the ill effects of black on his imagination were more owing to its connexion with any disagreeable ideas, than that the good effects of more cheerful colours were derived from their connexion with pleasing ones. They had both probably their effects from their natural operation.[166]

In Burke's view, blackness terrified us not simply because we had been taught to fear it, but because our dread of darkness had a physiological source—it caused tension in the muscles of the eye and this, in turn, generated terror. For Burke and many of his contemporaries, it was precisely because of its innate capacity to produce terror that blackness functioned as the source of the sublime. And the sublime, as is well known, came to occupy a central role in the aesthetic ideology, as it was variously associated with the ethical discourse of the Enlightenment and with revolutionary terror.[167]

Radical theories of racial difference now tend to be adduced to the end of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, and economies of difference in the period are posited as diverse and malleable, but the new readings of alterity continuously struggle to reconcile the larger moral economies of differences with the more specific racialized forms that stand out at the end of the century. Roxanna Wheeler, for example, has argued that "throughout the eighteenth century older conceptions of Christianity, civility, and rank were *more explicitly* important to Britons' assessment of themselves and other people than physical attributes such as skin color, shape of the nose, or texture of the hair."[168] She has further asserted that other marks of rank, such as dress, manners, and language, constituted more visible forms of difference and that developmental, so-called four-stage theories of human development, "arguably offered a more significant form of racialization of the body politic than the categories concerning the physical body found in natural history."[169]
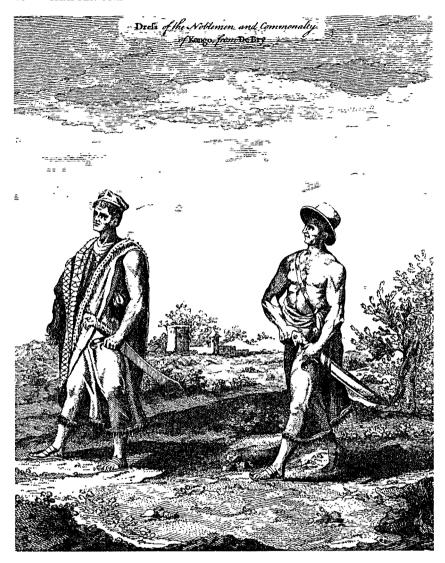
But my overall focus on the role of blackness in the negative dialectic of modernity departs from this diffuseness of difference, or, rather, its pluralization. Models developed within philosophy or natural history would, of course, be more nuanced than the images of black difference that circulated in the common culture, but this does not make them more compelling for two particular reasons that are central to my project. First, the power of visual images—what has come to be known as "the scopic regime" of modernity—cannot be underestimated.[170] From early modern notions of perspective to the retinal images that Descartes put at the center of his philosophy of mind, the visual was the dominant model of representation in the reimagination of a modern identity, and this has led scholars of theories of the mind, the imaginary, and epistemology to conclude that modernity was "resolutely ocularcentric" and to identify the "ubiquity of vision as the master sense of the modern era."[171]

Second, explored in purely visual terms, the image of the black would retain surprising consistency, thus challenging the ideas of immutable difference noted earlier. Here, the issue is not whether images of blacks in the European regimen of representation were positive or negative; rather, across the whole spectrum of modernity, from the early modern period to the era of high imperialism, from the European courts to the streets and coffeehouses of the modern period, the black stood out because of his or her color. It was color that made black difference visible, either in a demonic or benign fashion. In fact, in the few instances when they sought to overcome the logic of difference, European commentators and engravers of African scenes strove to find a way around blackness altogether and present the African in a "white face" thereby deploying analogy to efface polarity.[172] The preference of analogy over polarity was particularly marked in the early modern period when Europeans sought to convert

Africans and thus sought paradigms that would efface difference. Many Italian or Portuguese accounts of African social and political institutions from the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth assumed that black polities and principalities were not different from European ones and hence did not shy away from the superimposition of African experiences with European ideographs.[173] Looking at Theodore de Bry's illustrations of the dresses of Congo nobleman (fig. 1.6), for example, one can assume that the famous engravers did not make any distinction between Africans and Europeans, that blackness was not a negative or remarked feature in their imagination of the other.[174] Alternatively, one could argue that African subjects, cultures, and customs could only be communicated through European models or masks.

The De Brys did not, of course, set foot in Africa, and their illustrations were based on the accounts of the travelers whose works they were engraving, but one can assume that what was foremost in the minds of both writers and illustrators was the task of assimilating Africa to fit into European ideals of social class, cultural practices, and behavior. Here, the work of conversion or cultural translation was predicated on both the recognition of difference and its transcendence. For, as Vicente Rafael has observed in a different context, translation "involves not simply the ability to speak in a language other than one's own but the capacity to reshape one's thoughts and actions in accordance with accepted forms."[175] Premised on the need "to submit to the conventions of a given social order," translation becomes "a matter of first discerning the differences between and within social codes and then of seeing the possibility of getting across those differences."[176]

Still, the discourse of similitude was always marginal and ephemeral. The causes of this ephemerality were the political, cultural, and legal demands of slavery, especially in the Americas. The political and moral economy of slavery mandated the separation of the black and white, even in similar conditions of servitude, as was the case in colonial Virginia, and the isolation of the African from what was considered human under law and convention. Racial attitudes and imagery may have hardened at the end of the eighteenth century, but no one doubts that they had been there at the beginning of the modern period. Similarly, it is difficult to conceive of modern slavery without its manifest racism. This racism had a paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and pragmatic value. The paradigmatic axis was one of negation and dissociation: blackness served a useful purpose in the modern social imaginary because it represented the spectrum against which whiteness was imagined. Blackness also helped nurture what Winthrop Jordan has called a "novel relativism"; the color of the African "was to remain for centuries what it had been from the first, a standing problem for natural philosophers."[177] The whiteness of Queen

1.6 Johan Theodore and Johan Israel de Bry, *Dress of the Noblemen and Commonalty of Kongo*. From Thomas Astley, ed., *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1745–1747), vol. 3, plate xv, facing p. 248.

Elizabeth's alabaster bosom was often measured against the color of the "blackmoores," who, though threatening to contaminate the realm, could still find a place as pendants on her earrings and at the top of the family crest of John Hawkins, her slave trader.[178] Whether elevated or demonized in the European imagination, "it was the African's color of

skin that became his defining characteristic, and aroused the deepest re-
sponse in Europeans."[179] Even William Blake, an opponent of slavery in
good standing, couldn't imagine Africans having an identity outside their
color (fig. 1.7)

The visual visibility of blacks does not imply that they were the only
others considered outside the norm of the human and thus essentially
fated for slavery. On the contrary, scholars of slavery have noted how, in
the Americas especially, Native Americans were imagined and processed
to provide the first paradigm for difference as a precondition for domi-
nation.[180] From the mines of Peru to the farms of North America, native
peoples were the first to be included in the economy of bondage. And yet
the enslavement of Native Americans was rarely justified through the in-
vocation of their color, for while Europeans and white Americans held "a
deep prejudice against almost all aspects of Indian culture," they did not
have a strong bias "against Indian color, shape, or features; the American
native was socially deplorable but physically admirable."[181] The distinc-
tion between culture and color would have important consequences both
for debates about the notions of taste and for the presence of slavery in
domains that prided themselves for their innate capacity for freedom.

One way that advocates of the Enlightenment and the culture of taste in
the Americas could rationalize slavery, for example, was to insist on the
alienness of the African, as denoted by color, in the geography of the new
world. Like other members of the Virginia aristocracy, to cite one famous
example, Thomas Jefferson considered Native Americans to be similar to
whites; they were essentially the same people "and the differences between
them were superficial, the effects of environment rather than biology."[182]
In contrast, Jefferson would often reflect on the meaning of the black skin
and the deficits associated with it, seeking to establish a scientific and ra-
tional explanation for the syntagmatic that was also the stigmata:

> The first difference which strikes us is that of colour. Whether the black of
> the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin,
> or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood,
> the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is
> fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us.
> And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater
> or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and
> white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour
> in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the counte-
> nances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the
> other race?[183]

Jefferson would go on to a make a direct analogy between the civili-
zational abilities of native Americans, or at least their potential for

1.7 William Blake, *Europe Supported by Africa and America.* 1796. Engraving. From John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam.* Copy in Princeton University Library.

membership in the kingdom of culture and the realm of taste, and black cultural incapacity:

> The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture.[184]

One could argue, of course, that the development of a racial imaginary, especially one predicated on color differences, was driven by the pragmatic need to establish moral and legal boundaries between white servants and black slaves in the American colonies. But as I will show in the next three chapters, even when the political economy of slavery presupposed racism or used it as a form of rationalization, it still demanded a relentless racial logic and a sensorium predicated on blackness as a form of disgust. For some leading cultural citizens of Virginia, blacks as a race were considered to be, in the words of Arthur Lee, "the most detestable and vile that ever the earth produced."[185] This was a view echoed by Edward Long in the *History of Jamaica*, which I will return to in later chapters.[186]

Theories of race and racism were shifting throughout the modern period, and it may well be the case that by the end of the eighteenth century, hard-core racist thinking had moved from the broader cultural sphere to what Wahrman has termed "eccentric outposts."[187] But whether we are dealing with the belated attempt by agents of the slave trade—the Liverpool interest, for example—to deploy the specter of race to justify their profits; or the abolitionists' imposition of a pathos of suffering on the black body, as was evident in Josiah Wedgwood's famous medallion for the committee on the abolition of the slave trade; or Blake's attempts to imagine the African woman in the comity of nations, racialization seems to have increased rather than diminished at the end of the eighteenth century. The aura of blackness seemed inescapable.

Notes

PREFACE

1. Walcott, "The Sea Is History," *Collected Poems*, 364.
2. Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia," 125–38.
3. Ibid., 130.
4. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 3.
5. Ibid., 7.
6. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 41–42.
7. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 227.

CHAPTER ONE. OVERTURE: SENSIBILITY IN THE AGE OF SLAVERY

1. Bosman, *New and Accurate Description*, 117.
2. The image of the black in the early modern period is outside the scope of this book, but see the following general surveys by Erickson, "Representations of Blacks and Blackness," 499–527, and "Moment of Race," 27–36; and the essays collected in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Earler and Lowe. See also the pioneering work of E. Jones, *Elizabethan Image* and *Othello's Countrymen*. See also K. Hall, *Things of Darkness*; Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*; and the essays collected in Hendricks and Parker, *Women, "Race," and Writing*.
3. Kunst, *African in European Art*, 23. Kunst's view is challenged or qualified by Kim Hall in "Object into Object?" 346–79. For a biography of Rembrandt, see Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*.
4. Donnan in *Documents Illustrative of the History* 1:149–50. The book was first published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., 1930–1935.
5. The civilizing process is discussed by Elias in *Civilizing Process*, 363–448.
6. This point has been underscored by Allison Blakely in *Blacks in the Dutch World*, 119. Kim Hall provides a compelling reading of the role of the black figure on the margins of the early modern portrait in "Object into Object?" 321–24.

7. Benjamin, "Work of Art," 17–52. Here I'm thinking of Karl Marx's famous use of a religious analogy to describe the emergence, in capitalism, of a relationship "between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" and his precise conclusion: "This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities." See *Capital* 1:165. What Marx forgot to say was that the concept of the fetish (Portuguese *fetissio*) was invented to describe trade relations on the West African slave coast. This is the subject of a series of remarkable essays by William Pietz: "Problem of the Fetish, I," "Problem of the Fetish, II," "Problem of the Fetish, IIIa." See also his "Fetishism and Materialism."

8. Mauss, "Category of the Human Mind." See also Charles Taylor's essay, "The Person." The literature on modernity is too extensive to cite here, but I have relied on the classical philosophical texts, including C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self* and *Secular Age*; Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*; Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*; and Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*. For a historical exploration of the making of the self in a specifically eighteenth-century English context, see Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*.

9. The key documents here, which I will be referring to throughout this chapter and the next, are Mendelssohn, "On the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*; Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas*; Kames, *Essays on the Principles*; and A. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

10. Kant, "Answer to the Question," 55.

11. Outram, *Enlightenment*, 3. See also her *Panorama of the Enlightenment*. As will become apparent, the debates surrounding the project of Enlightenment do not occupy the center of my project, which will focus on the British tradition of taste, but the larger philosophical debates are pertinent. For these, see the essays collected in Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?* See also Habermas, "Modernity," 3–15. For the Enlightenment outside the North European circuit, see Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*; Hulme and Jordanova, *Enlightenment and Its Shadows*; and Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*. For slavery and the Enlightenment, see Duchet, *Anthropologie et historie*; and Cohen, *French Encounter with Africans*.

12. Kant, "Answer to the Question," 55.

13. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling*, 110–11. The question of racism in Kant is outside the scope of my discussion, but it has generated significant debate in revisionary histories of the Enlightenment. Thomas Hill and Bernard Boxill focus on Kant's concern for universal freedom and consider racism tangential to his project; see their "Kant and Race." For a contrary view, see Eze, "Color of Reason"; and Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race?" See also Neugerbauer, "Racism of Hegel and Kant"; and Judy, "Kant and the Negro."

14. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 3.

15. Cited in Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 91.

16. Quoted in Kramnick, *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, 669.

17. Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*, xv.

18. Reiss, introduction to *Kant: Political Writings*, 18.

19. A. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 216–17. My discussion here is indebted to Howard Caygill, *Art of Judgement*, 38–97.

20. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 9.

21. Here, I provide a synopsis of a debate that has generated a lot of literature. In addition to Cassirer, see Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*; Bernstein, *Fate of Art*; Osborne, *From an Aesthetic Point of View*; Hammermeister, *German Aesthetic Tradition*; Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*; and Woodmansee, *Author, Art, and the Market*.

22. Hulme and Jordanova, introduction to *Enlightenment and Its Shadows*, 7.

23. Outram, *Panorama of the Enlightenment*, 142–46.

24. Decorse, *Archeology of Elmina*, 25. See also Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825*.

25. Blakely, *Blacks,* 104–5.

26. Ibid., 105.

27. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66. For a discussion of the black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity, see Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 1–40.

28. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts*, 164. For a philosophical/ historical exploration of the system of art, see Preben Mortensen in *Art in the Social Order*, 1–12, and the essays collected in Mattick, *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*.

29. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 164.

30. Ibid., 225. For Kristeller, a key element in the transformation of the arts was the emergence of the amateur as a critic: "The origin of modern aesthetics in amateur criticism would go a long way to explain why works of art have until recently been analyzed by aestheticians from the point of view of the spectator, reader and listener rather than of the producing artist" (225).

31. Addison and Steele, *Spectator* 1:31.

32. Danto, *Philosophical Disenfranchisement*, 166.

33. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 278.

34. Ibid., 339.

35. In addition to Cassirer, the question of criticism in the Enlightenment has been discussed by Anthony Cascardi in *Consequences of Enlightenment*, 49–91.

36. When I commenced work on this book, the major division in the field of aesthetic criticisms was between those who insisted on the redemptive work of art—its capacity to make truth claims—and those who dismissed its function as an alternative mode of knowledge. For the cognitive claims of art and aesthetic alienation, see Bernstein, *Fate of Art,* 1–16; and Osborne, introduction to *From an Aesthetic Point of View*, 1–12. Terry Eagleton dismisses the political project of the aesthetics as part of the middle-class search for political hegemony; see *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 3. See also T. Bennett, *Outside Literature*; and Beech and Roberts, "Spectres of the Aesthetic."

37. Jay, "'Aesthetic Ideology' as Ideology," 46.

38. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 19.

39. Menke, "Modernity, Subjectivity," 46.

40. For a discussion of Sterne's rhetoric and ethics of sensibility in relation to slavery, see Wood, *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography*, 12–18.

41. Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho,* 31. See also Sancho, *New Light on the Life of Ignatius Sancho*.

42. In addition to his letters, Sancho's investment in the culture of taste can be detected in his musical compositions. See J. Wright, *Ignatius Sancho* and the essays collected in King, et al., *Ignatius Sancho*. For a study of the role of black writing during the period, see Sandiford, *Measuring the Moment* and *Genius in Bondage*; Ellis, "Ignatius Sancho's Letters"; and Ogude, *Genius in Bondage*.

43. Adorno, *Prisms*, 34.

44. Ashton, *Negative Dialectics*.

45. Caygill, *Art of Judgement*, 98.

46. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 38.

47. E. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 160–61.

48. A. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 211.

49. Brewer, "'Most Polite Age'," 349.

50. For the histories and discourses of taste and modern subjectivity in Britain, I have relied on the following: Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*; De Bolla, *Discourse of the Sublime*; De Bolla et al., *Land, Nation and Culture*; Ashfield and de Bolla, *Sublime Reader*; Bermingham and Brewer, ed., *Consumption of Culture*; Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*; McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*; Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking*; Sekora, *Luxury*; and Todd, *Sensibility*.

51. Bermingham, introduction to *Consumption of Culture*, 4.

52. McKendrick, "Consumer Revolution" in *Birth of a Consumer Society*, 2.

53. Ibid., 9.

54. A detailed exploration of this process can be found in Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*; Mortensen, *Art in the Social*, especially part 2; McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*; Sekora, *Luxury*; and Solkin, *Painting for Money*.

55. Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*.

56. R. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste*, 11.

57. In addition to Jones's *Gender and the Formation of Taste*, De Bolla, *Discourse of the Sublime*, and Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, excellent discussions of the politics and the discourse of politeness can be found in Barrell, *Political Theory of Painting*; Klein, "Third Earl of Shaftesbury," *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* and "Politeness for Plebes"; and Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*.

58. For the way these debates played out in Scotland, see the essays collected in Hont and Ignatieff, *Wealth and Virtue*; and Dwyer and Sher, *Sociability and Society*. For the English provinces, see Wilson, *Sense of the People*.

59. For debates on civility and taste before this period, see Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*.

60. A famous example of the mercantile code as the mediator of social relationships can be found at the beginning of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* where Yorick slips a crown to the French chambermaid, a reward that, observes Robert Markley, "puts a price on her virtue." See Markley, "Sentimentality as Performance."

61. Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 95; and McKendrick, "Consumer Revolution," 14.

62. See Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, 241; and Castronovo, *English Gentleman*.

63. McKendrick, "Consumer Revolution," 10.

64. Steele, *Spectator* 6 (March 7, 1711), in Addison and Steele, *Spectator*1:26.

65. Quoted in Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 80.

66. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History*, 66.

67. Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 83. For the August desire for order, see Humphreys, "Arts in Eighteenth-Century Britain," 5–7. See also Lipking, *Ordering of the Arts*.

68. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men*, 218. See also Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 107–17; and Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*.

69. Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 231.

70. Ibid., 231–332.

71. S. Johnson, *Rambler*, no. 92 (February 2, 1751), in *The Rambler* 2:128.

72. E. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 12.

73. Ibid., 1.

74. E. Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 126.

75. Porter, "Enlightenment in England," 11.

76. Lamont and Fournier, *Cultivating Differences*, 9.

77. This point is made powerfully by Bermingham in her introduction to *Consumption of Culture*, 5. I will return to the notion of disavowal later in this chapter, but I am using it strictly in the Freudian sense, not as a reference to negation, but to the subjects' refusal to embrace the consequences, social or psychic, of experiences that they clearly perceived. See Laplanche and Pontalis, *Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 118–21.

78. Ibid., 353.

79. McKendrick, in *Birth of a Consumer Society*, 108.

80. Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, 48. See also McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood," in McKendrick et al., *Birth of a Consumer Society*, 100–45.

81. For a discussion of Wright and the spectacle of power and the industrial revolution, see Daniels, *Field of Vision*, 43–79.

82. See McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood."

83. Quoted in Honour, *Image of the Black*, 62.

84. Ibid., 62–63.

85. Quoted in Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, xv.

86. Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 5.

87. A. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 214.

88. Ibid., 216.

89. Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts," 278.

90. The essays collected in Bermingham and Brewer, *Consumption of Culture*, provide solid evidence of the interplay of affirmation and denial in the construction of the culture of taste.

91. Caygill, *Art of Judgement*, 43.

92. Brewer, "'Most Polite Age'," 353. For the ways in which gender could disturb the epistemological boundaries of the culture of taste, see L. Brown, *Fables of Modernity* and *Ends of Empire*; Castle, *Female Thermometer* and *Masquerade and Civilization*; and Nussbaum, *Autobiographical Subject*, *Torrid Zones*, and *Limits of the Human*.

93. Wilson, introduction to *New Imperial History*. See also Wilson, *Island Race*; Armitage, *Ideological Origins*; and Colley, *Britons*.

94. Nussbaum and Brown, *New Eighteenth Century*, 14. See also Nussbaum, *Global Eighteenth Century*; and Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*.

95. See Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 70–71.

96. Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 116.

97. Barrell, *Dark Side of the Landscape*, 5.

98. Wood, *Blind Memory*, 7. For the relation between aesthetics and the culture of pain, see Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; and Scarry, *Body in Pain*.

99. For William Blake, see Bindman et al., *Mind-forg'd Manacles*; for visual culture in the slave zones, see Quilley and Kriz, *Economy of Colour*; Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar*; and Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*.

100. Walvin, *England, Slaves, and Freedom*. See also Walvin's earlier works: *Black and White*; *Black Ivory*; and *Black Presence*. The literature on blacks in Britain is extensive, but I have found the following useful for this chapter: Gerzina, *Black England* and *Black London*; Fryer, *Staying Power*; Shyllon, *Black Britannia* and *Black Slaves in Britain*; P. Edwards and Walvin, *Black Personalities*; Walvin, *Black Presence*; and Little, *Negroes in Britain*.

101. Walvin, *England, Slaves, and Freedom*, 27.

102. I borrow the concept of "political unconscious" from Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 17–102.

103. Walvin, *England, Slaves, and Freedom*, 27. Walvin is discussing the specific examples of England here, but his example could be said to apply to the whole of Britain after the Act of Union. If there is slippage between Britishness and Englishness here and elsewhere, it is because after the Act of Union of 1707, Scottish interests tended to be sublimated to English debates, especially in matters of empire. I discuss this problem in Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*. See also Colley, *Britons*, 11–12.

104. Walvin, *England, Slaves, and Freedom*, 33. A similar set of paradoxes and complexities were at work in France, too, where the emergence and consolidation of a culture of liberty went hand in hand with the development of the slave trade. For this, see McCloy, *Negro in France*; Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France*; and C. Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*.

105. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 35.

106. For Marx's classical terms, see the preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 9–15.

107. Brewer, "Culture as Commodity," 353.

108. C. Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 9.

109. The terms here are borrowed from Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*, 1–6, and *In the Wilderness*, especially chapter 3.

110. I return to this topic in subsequent chapters, but see Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, and M. Smith, *How Race Is Made*.

111. Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 25.

112. Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, 60.

113. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 5.

114. Wish, "Aristotle, Plato," 83.

115. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 5.

116. Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 244.

117. Quoted in J. White and R. White, *Slavery in the American South*, 113. My argument here is indebted to Page DuBois's, *Slaves and Other Objects*, 3–31.

118. Indigenous African slavery is the subject of Perbi's excellent book, *A History of Indigenous Slavery.* Other important studies of slavery in Africa can be found in Miers and Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa.*

119. Debates on the political economy of slavery are outside the scope of this project, but for a long historical view, see Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*; Barker, *African Link*; Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*; Searing, *West African Slavery*; E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery.*

120. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 4–5. See also Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic.*

121. Quoted in Jordan, *White over Black*, 74. My discussion of the haunting of freedom by the ghosts of slavery relies heavily on Jordan's discussion of colonial encounters in America. See also Davis's *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*; and Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism.* For colonial encounters in the Atlantic world, see the essays collected in Canny and Pagden, *Colonial Identity*; Canny, *Oxford History*; and Marshall, *Oxford History.* For the cultural traffic between Africa and the Americas, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans.*

122. Quoted in Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 15.

123. Ibid.

124. Davis, *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 13.

125. Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches.* There were important counterpoints to Schama's history, including Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World*; and Burck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti." Schama's later work on slavery and abolitionism, *Rough Crossings*, can be read as a rectification of his prior omissions, but it begs one of the questions informing my study: why and how can European domestic culture and slavery be treated as part of the same register?

126. Slavery is barely mentioned in C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self* and *Secular Age*, or in Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*; Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*; or Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*; it is barely present in Porter, *Enlightenment* or *English Society*; Wahrman's revisionist work, *Making of the Modern Self*, devotes only a few pages to the question of slavery itself.

127. Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 31.

128. De Bolla, *Art Matters*, 143.

129. Colley, *Britons*, 6. I had taken up and developed this point in *Maps of Englishness.*

130. Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, 12.

131. Nussbaum and Brown, *New Eighteenth Century*, 5.

132. Wilson, introduction to *New Imperial History*, 1, 3. Wilson provides an outstanding revisionist account of nations, empires, and identities in the eighteenth century in *Island Race.*

133. Ibid., 1.

134. Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*, xv.

135. Ibid.; emphasis is mine.

136. For Wahrman, see ibid; for Foucault, see afterword to *Michel Foucault.*

137. The work on slave culture is too extensive to cover here, but for antebellum slavery, I have found the following general studies useful: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Blassingame, *Slave Community* and *Slave Testimony*; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*; Stuckey, *Slave Culture*; and D. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* For slave culture in Jamaica, my

West Indian case study, see Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica*; and Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*.

138. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 13.

139. Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 242.

140. Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*.

141. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 6.

142. Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery*, 1–2.

143. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 13.

144. Daston, "Historical Epistemology," 282.

145. Quoted in C. Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 39.

146. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 37.

147. Wilson, introduction to *New Imperial History*, 16.

148. Trouillot, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot."

149. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 82. Modern rationality is vigorously defended by Habermas in "Modernity: An Incomplete Project."

150. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

151. Foucault, introduction to *On the Normal and the Pathological*, 12.

152. Ibid.

153. For the role of small stories in the larger history of empire, see Colley, *Captives Britain*, 12; for the vulnerability of the imperial center, see Wilson, introduction, 17; for minorities and ethnics within Britain and the Atlantic world, see Kidd, "Ethnicity in the British Atlantic World" and his earlier *British Identities before Nationalism*.

154. Nussbaum and Brown, *New Eighteenth Century*, 3.

155. C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 16–17.

156. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62–80.

157. Ibid., 74.

158. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 114–15. These questions have been raised by others, including D. Scott in *Refashioning Futures* and *Conscripts of Modernity*. See also Casid, *Sowing Empire*, especially chapter 1.

159. Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, 10.

160. For the structure of difference before the eighteenth century, see Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*; E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*; Hartog, *Mirror of Herodotus*; and Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*.

161. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 3.

162. This is the subject of important work by Curtin, *Image of Africa*; Cohen, *French Encounter with Africans*; and Hammond and Jablow, *Africa That Never Was*.

163. Gilman, "Figure of the Black," 373. My discussion here is heavily indebted to Gilman. See also Popkin, "Philosophical Basis," 245–62.

164. Gilman, "Figure of the Black," 374.

165. Quoted in Ibid., 374–75.

166. E. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 131–32. For Burke and the Chelsden experiment, see Gilman, "Figure of the Black"; M. Armstrong, "Effects of Blackness," 213–36; and Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, 192–200.

167. For these two versions of the sublime, see De Bolla, *Discourse of the Sublime*; and Paulson, "Burke's Sublime," 241–69.

168. Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 7; emphasis in the original.

169. Ibid.

170. Metz, *Imaginary Signifier*, 61.

171. Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," 3. See also Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

172. For these terms, see Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*.

173. See Cavazzi de Montecúccolo, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos do Congo*; Pifagetta, *Report of the Kingdom of Congo*; and Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*. For a study of these colonial encounters, see Mudimbe-Boyi, *Essais sur les Cultures en Contact*.

174. This point has been made by Bassani and Fagg in *Africa and the Renaissance Art*, 45.

175. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 210. See also Segal, *Solo in the New Order*.

176. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 210.

177. Jordan, *White over Black*, 11.

178. See Reilly, "Race and Racism," 126. For Hawkins and his crest, see E. Jones, *Elizabethan Image of Africa*, 17, illustration 6. Hawkins's role in the beginning of the slave trade is discussed by Hazlewood, *Queen's Slave Trader*; and Pollitt, "John Hawkins's Troublesome Voyages," 26–40.

179. Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 447. Eric Williams, in *Capitalism and Slavery*, argues that debates on the origins of slavery had given a "racial twist" to what was "basically an economic phenomenon" and that slavery "was not born of racism; rather racism was the consequence of slavery" (7), but the centrality of anti-black racism in the development of the peculiar institution is now established in the canonical literature, especially on the antebellum South and the West Indies. In addition to Jordan and Davis, see the conclusions by E. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom,* especially chapter 16; Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism*, chapter 7; and Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, chapter 1.

180. E. Morgan, *American Slavery*, 44–70.

181. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism*, 11, 13. See also Parry, *Image of the Indian and the Black Man*.

182. John C. Miller, *Wolf by the Ears*, 65. See also Jordan, *White over Black*, 429–81.

183. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 138.

184. Ibid., 140.

185. Quoted in John C. Miller, *Wolf by the Ears*, 62.

186. See Long, *History of Jamaica* 2:351–53.

187. Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*, 13.

CHAPTER TWO. INTERSECTIONS: TASTE, SLAVERY, AND THE MODERN SELF

1. Larpent, *Woman's View of Drama,* entry for April 24, 1797. For a discussion of the diaries and Larpent's interest in performance, see Colombo in "This Pen of Mine Will Say Too Much." Useful background for women in the period can be found in Vickery's *Gentleman's Daughter.*

2. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 56–75.